
**Civil War Letters of Brigadier
General William Ward
Orme, 1862-1866**

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*One collector to Another
Harry E. Pratt
to
Howard K. Terry*



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CIVIL WAR LETTERS OF BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLIAM WARD ORME—1862-1866.

The following thirty four letters written by Gen. Orme are selected from a collection of some 300 'War' letters preserved by his daughter, Mrs. Lucy Orme Morgan of Bloomington, Illinois. They are selected because of their interest and information on the battles of Prairie Grove, Vicksburg and the capture of Yazoo City. They are produced entire, except in a very few cases where an extended discussion of his children is omitted. They cover the activities of Gen. Orme and the Ninety-Fourth Regiment of Illinois Volunteers; from September to December in 1862 and June to the middle of August 1863. The letters were written to his wife Mrs. Nannie L. Orme at Bloomington, Illinois. There is included one letter to Leonard Swett of Bloomington, and a note from General Herron to General Orme.

William Ward Orme was born at Washington, D. C., February 17, 1832. He was educated at Mount St. Mary's College, at Emmettsburg, Md. He came West in that famous year '49, to Chicago where he worked as a messenger boy in the bank of J. Young Scammon. Coming to Bloomington in 1850, he was admitted to the bar two years later. Entering the circuit clerk's office he remained an efficient worker there until the fall of 1853; then went into partnership with Leonard Swett in the practice of law. They formed an ideal law firm. Mr. Orme was a model office lawyer. Mr. Swett conducted the cases in court in a manner that made him the peer of any in the Northwest. In 1861, Orme was a delegate to the State Constitutional Convention.

He was a great favorite of Judge David Davis and Abraham Lincoln; the latter remarked that Orme was the most promising lawyer of his age in the state.

When the 94th Illinois was raised he was elected Colonel and immediately applied to the President through Mr. Swett,

for active service and President Lincoln gave Mr. Swett the following note, to be handed to General Halleck. "Gen. Halleck, please see the bearer, Mr. Swett, who will tell you truth only about Wm. W. Orme, whom I also know, to be one of the most active, competent, and best men in the world. A. Lincoln." August 2, 1862.

At the battle of Prairie Grove, Colonel Orme was in command of a brigade. Major-General Herron in his report says: "Colonel Orme was in the thickest of the fight, performing his duties with great gallantry." On Nov. 29, 1862 he received his commission as brigadier-general. In the siege of Vicksburg, he again commanded a brigade. It was here that he contracted consumption that caused his death three years later.

November 11, 1863, he was detailed to examine various rebel prisons in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. In December, 1863, he was appointed to the command of the responsible post of Chicago, which included Camp Douglas, with several thousand rebel prisoners. Increasing ill health obliged him to resign from the service April 26, 1864. In September he was appointed Supervising Special Agent of the Treasury at Memphis, a position for which his methodical business habits, integrity, and urbanity, admirably fitted him. He resigned this position in November 1865. He went home from Memphis shattered in health, and gradually declined until his death, September 13, 1866.

On October 27, 1853, he married Miss Nannie L. McCullough, daughter of William McCullough, then circuit clerk of the county. They had four children, William born in 1854; Bernadine in 1856; Lucy in 1858; Edward in 1860.

The Ninety-Fourth Illinois Volunteer Infantry was better known as the "McLean County Regiment." It was organized under the President's call for 600,000 men, issued in the summer of 1862. Mr. Orme offered his services as Colonel, and the Board of Supervisors a \$50 bounty to each enlisted man. In two instances a father and four sons joined the same company.

The regiment was mustered in August 20, 1862, and on August 25th entrained for St. Louis where it was quartered, armed and equipped at Benton Barracks. On September 9th it moved by train to Rolla, Missouri.

HARRY E. PRATT.

Camp Mc Lean, Sept. 10-13, 1862
5 Miles S. W. Of Rolla-Mo.--

My dear wife—

This is the first hour of pen ink & paper since I left Benton Barracks— After leaving you on Monday evening I had a very busy time— I got a little sleep, & got up at 3 O'Clock next morning— It was some labor to get the Regiment ready to move— We did not succeed in leaving St. Louis however until about 11 O'Clock Tuesday morning— and reached Rolla in the evening at about 8 O'Clock in a drenching rain storm— I have a good poncho however & kept dry— My men took possession of all the sheds & open buildings & spent the night the best way they could— I got some supper about 9 O'Clock and secured a bed at the hotel—

Rolla is anything but prepossessing— There is no water in the town—and we nearly died of thirst— Yesterday we recd. orders to move out to camp— and here I am with my Regiment encamped in a little Valley— surrounded on all sides with high abrupt hills, a nice little stream-called *little Piney* — circles the camp. I have taken possession of a log cabin for my headquarters—

My black man has captured a pig— which he has already skinned & cleaned ready to roast for dinner— This is our first practical understanding of the Confiscation Act—

Joe's men took a calf last night— and say they bought it— Whether they did so or not is very doubtful— Joe, Charley & Howard are well.—¹

My health has been good— I stand the labor & work so far very well— And with a Regiment you may be sure I have enough to do.— I like the business well.— In ten days I ex-

¹ 'Joe' was Capt. Joseph P. Orme of Company H; 'Charley' was Charles E. Orme, Lieutenant in Company H. Both were younger brothers of Col. Orme. 'Howard', was Howard McCullough, private in Co. H. He was a brother-in-law of Col. Orme.

pect to move down to Springfield Mo.— which will be a march of 120 miles— If I stand that trip I think I'll do.— They are expecting an attack at that point & desire all the forces that can be centred there.— It may be we'll have a fight there— We are under Brig Genl. Herron— and are in his Brigade—² News here we get none. But you may rest assured that Camp life is pleasant— so long as one keeps well—

When I can return to see you is of course an untold matter—I think of you often.—Often did I say, yes all the time.— Yesterday at Rolla I was buying some peaches of an old woman who had a daughter in the wagon with her, and the daughter had three children I remarked to her that I had four beautiful children at home, and I would give a dollar a piece just to see them a minute— Yes, said the old woman you'd give two dollars— Indeed said the girl I know you'd give ten dollars apiece— I told the girl I thought she measured my feelings the best.—

Enjoy yourself, My dear Nannie as much as you can during my absence & I shall feel perfectly happy to think that you are doing so— After the war is over & I shall have returned home either perfectly sound or partially damaged we can remember with pleasure my services to the country— You'll feel prouder of me, and I shall feel better myself— Home will never have had so many charms as then— My absence from home only learns me to enjoy home the more when I reach it—

Remember me to all at home = Kiss the little ones and write me often— Say to Judge Davis³ that I am well, doing well & am well pleased will write him when I have more leisure—

² Herron, Francis Jay (1837-1902). In 1861 he was made lieutenant-colonel of the Ninth Iowa regiment. Brigadier-general of volunteers in 1862. Early in 1863 he joined Grant at Vicksburg and commanded the left wing of the besieging forces as major-general (1862) until the capture of the city. He subsequently captured Yazoo City with its boats and supplies; commanded the Thirteenth army corps and broke up the traffic along the Rio Grande.

³ Davis, David (1815-1886). He is referred to in these letters as Judge Davis, as he was completing his fourteenth year on the "Eighth Judicial Circuit" in Illinois. He was appointed in October, 1862 to the United States Supreme Court. He was a close friend of the Orme family and took care of the estate of Gen. Orme upon his death in 1866.

Don't fail to write me often— I will write whenever I can— Remember on the march it is difficult to write letters =

As ever affectionately
Wm. W. Orme

Here is a picture of my Head-Quarters
(rough sketch of log cabin)

P.S. In honor of old McLean where we have left the loved ones I have named this camp "*Camp McLean*"

Camp Herron=
on Little Piney—
Sept 17th 1862

My dear Nannie:

Mr. Isaac Funk¹ has just reached our camp with our Regimental flags—was received with three hearty cheers; and I immediately thought it a good chance to send you back by him a short letter—

We struck our tents at Camp McLean yesterday morning— My orders were to be ready to march at six O'Clock— I was up at four O'Clock and everything ready to move at the hour; but received no orders to march until 9 O'Clock. Genl. Herron rode up to me and complimented me on being the only Colonel whose regiment was ready to move at the time ordered. There were four other regiments besides mine— We marched to this place— 10 miles — reached here last evening at 3 O'Clock.— We did not pitch our tents, but bivouacked in the woods by the side of a little spring— where we are now. The commandg. officer has named the Brigade camp, Camp Herron.— Our march yesterday was thro' a rough country and the day was very hot — but we got thro' pretty well.—

We move from here to day and will march some eight or ten miles — and we will camp to-night on the Big Piney—

The streams thro' here are very pretty— running on Rocky bottoms— the water as clear as can be. On my ar-

¹ Funk, Isaac, (1797-1865). State Senator, 1862-1866, in Illinois, large land owner, stock raiser and public benefactor of McLean County.

rival here yesterday, I went to the Gasconade River for a swim— I found it a beautiful stream about a 100 yards wide— and the water some eight feet deep— thus affording me a fine chance to exercise my swimming powers.

Last night while sleeping under the trees on my cot I was waked up by a shower of rain at about 2 O'Clock A. M.— I immediately got up had my tent pitched and finished my sleep under cover — I slept nicely last night— I am feeling well and so far I stand the rough times well — I think I can go thro' all right,— but of course I can't say.— I am prepared for anything that may turn up. I lack no enjoyment save the presence of home and all its endearing charms.— Just one sight of your dear self— Nannie — and our sweet children would be the pleasantest comfort imaginable—

Let me repeat to you that the assurance of your personal comfort & enjoyment will make me feel much better in the lonely solitude of camp life—

Remember me to everybody at home— interested in my welfare— Tell Judge Davis & Mr. Swett² that I am well and doing finely and enjoy myself in my present life.—

Everything so far moves off pleasantly— Ask the Judge to write me often— Say to him that my opportunities for letter writing are few, and that a letter to you must always receive the first chance —

Kiss the little ones — talk to them about me Keep them at school and write me often.

Good bye until I get another chance to write you— Write me often— direct to St. Louis thus: Col. Wm. W. Orme — 94th Ills. Vols., Genl. Herron's Brigade— and your letters will follow us

Affectionately Your husband
Wm. W. Orme

² See next letter.

Head Quarters 94th Ills.
Near Springfield Mo.
Oct 1 1862

My dear Swett—

Your letter of the 27th reached me here this morning— I am comfortably encamped one mile west of Springfield. We have heretofore been busily engaged in drill; but a detail of 250 men each day for work on forts has broken into my Battalion Drills. I am so far well satisfied — a great deal more so than I would be at home under the present condition of the country— Were I at home on the list of the enrolled militia, I think I should feel rather queer.

I have stood the labor and fatigue of my new life very well— Am hearty, sleep and eat finely. I have plenty of fresh air day and night— I occupy my tent altogether, and have not slept in a house since I left St. Louis.—

Many of men have been sick— Diarrhea, fever, pneumonia flux &c. Our march from Rolla to this point was very rough— I can scarcely suppose a harder trip in store for us— We were all fresh, unused to marching and accustomed to regular hours.— Our daily marches were controlled by the distance to water.— The sun was powerfully hot, and the nights cool; roads dusty and water scarce— I marched my Regiment one day 25 miles; and I don't think I had much over 600 men when I got into camp, but they came straggling in during the night— I had to make that march in order to get water for the regiment. You have no idea of the scarcity of water in this country.

The desolation of war is more visible in this immediate vicinity than elsewhere on the route. Fine farms laid waste and good stone residences razed to the ground— It does look as if an army of vandals had passed thro' here. You can have no adequate idea of the utter desolation of a country by war, unless you have seen a country ravaged as this has been.=

Genl. Schofield is here in command in person.—¹ I am

¹ Schofield, Brig. Gen. John McAllister, (1831-1906). At this time he commanded the Missouri troops and the District of St. Louis.

under the immediate command of Genl. Herron.² He is a young man from Iowa— He cannot be much over 30 or 35 years of age. I am rather pleased with him. =

I cannot think you will have much trouble in securing me the place I have written about. Illinois will be entitled to some 15 Genls. and of course some of them will be from the new Regiments.— The command of a Brigadier is a very nice one, not very laborious and not requiring much ability; if I may judge from a great many I have seen.—

I should like very much for you to move a little in that direction— I am confident it can be brought about. And as soon as your campaign³ is over — say first week in November— if you are elected as you will be— you will have the thing almost your own way— And with yourself and Judge Davis (especially if he is on the Supreme Bench) a nomination in my favor would be confirmed in the Senate.— I desire this place for several reasons; some of which are, a natural desire to be as high as possible in the business in which I engage; the importance of the position, the greater liberty and freedom of command it would give; and chief of all, I would be in much better condition to go thro' the winter.— I have no fear of anything, except sickness and altho' I am now as hearty as a brick, and feel better than I have in a long time, I cannot guess the effect of a winter campaign— and as a matter of choice I would prefer, of course, to be in that position where I would have easier opportunities for personal care & comfort— You can see the difference when I tell you that a Brigadier has some five teams for himself and staff, while a Colonel only has about one & a half for the field & staff officers— However I will leave the matter with you, feeling assured that if there can be anything done, you will do it—

² Herron, Francis J., (1837-1902). He served in Iowa volunteer regiments becoming brigadier general of volunteers in July 1862, for a time commanding the Army of the Frontier, being made major-general of volunteers in Nov. 1862. He commanded the left wing of the investing forces at Vicksburg.

³ Swett, Leonard, (1825-1889). He was the law partner of Col. Orme, 1853-1865. At this time he was in the midst of a strenuous campaign against John T. Stuart for membership in the 38th. Congress.

I wrote Judge Davis yesterday — I suppose you have seen the letter before this reaches. I have sent my Major to St. Louis on business, and have also requested a leave of absence for him to visit Springfield & Bloomington Ills.— which I have no doubt he will obtain; if so he will call on you and give you full details about the Regiment—

One man Jefferson Kimler, died here this morning. He is from Leroy— He was well cared for, in a private house in the town. I understand he leaves a large family— Joe is well and all others whom you know. =

The President's proclamation meets with universal commendation among the soldiers— Everybody is in favor of it — The tendency of public opinion in the army— or rather the opinion of the army is very radical— They are for confiscation, emancipation & everything else.— You cannot be too ultra for the soldiers. That is the secret of such men as Mc Clermand, Logan, Scates⁴ & others moving forward so rapidly. I am glad you have finally determined to run against Stuart. You will have no difficulty in beating him.— He is a good man an able man, and I think a safe man in the national councils; but he is behind the times, and you will find the people will say so when it comes to voting.—

Be firm and decided upon the leading questions of the day. Take bold ground; the people are way in advance of you— If you can engineer any way to squeeze in the vote of this Regiment, I will send you up a solid vote in any way you want it.— If you desire it for effect I will have the vote of the Regiment taken and forward it to the Pantagraph for publication just time enough before the election to have its effect in the country.— Anything I can do for you at this end of the route if you will name it, I will do.— I should like to be home to aid & vote for you.—

Write to me often— A letter to a soldier in camp is deemed by the recipient a valuable present— Keep me ad-

⁴ McClermand, John A. Resigned from Congress in 1861 to accept a commission as Brig. Gen. of Volunteers from Pres. Lincoln, being promoted to Major General early in 1862.

Logan, John A. In March 1862 he was appointed brigadier general of volunteers and a few months later major general.

Scates, Walter B. In 1862 he received a major's commission and was assigned to the staff of Gen. McClermand, soon made assistant adjutant general.

vised from time to time of everything of interest— It costs you but five minutes times to write a letter, but it is worth two or three hours of pleasant enjoyment to me when it is received.—

My wife writes me frequently and I am thus advised of domestic affairs.—

I think our battles on the Potomac are fruitless victories.— We are expecting here to form part of a column to march on Little Rock— How long we will stay here, I cannot surmise; it may be a month. We have reports of fighting at our outposts most every-day. I sleep soundly however. I believe I can sleep soundly now, on a battle field.

I have enclosed you a brief note as you desire concerning the President's proclamation &c. You may use it as you please It is only general in terms. Between us, the only thing I fear in the matter is the effect of the proclamation in the Border States. It is doing just what ought to be done— But have we the power to enforce it— Had it have been issued at the beginning of the war when we were in high feather it might have done well; but now when we are driven across the Potomac, and our towns along the Ohio River laid waste, and when we have fallen back at every point, it looks really like a paper threat with no power behind it to enforce it.

After all tho' I am for it— And now Mr. Lincoln shd. draft a 500,000 column of men to help enforce it. There are not men enough in the field to put down the rebellion. We ought to have here an irresistible column that could march to the Gulf— So in Tennessee, so in Virginia. A Draft at once should be the programme. Get out once in the field and you can see the need of men— Don't fail to write me often, and don't forget my claims—

As ever Yr. friend Wm. W. Orme

Head Quarters
Springfield Mo
Oct. 20 1862

My dear wife—

To day is Monday — the sun is about passing below the horizon — the weather fine and everything here is as usual. I am engaged as heretofore work! work! work! I send out parties of cavalry here & there, and instruct men coolly to burn, kill and destroy. The invariable instruction, as against the guerillas who infest this country, is to take no prisoner but shoot them down in their tracks. I find myself talking as flippantly about killing men as I would have done at home upon any trivial subject— And yet it does not astonish me. We easily fall into regular channels of habit. And when a man goes to war as a soldier he soon finds that the duties of war come upon him easily.—

Our army is rapidly approaching a fight. I want to try my hand in a battle. I do like a good fight— There is something in it that seems to thrill & charm me. But I fear this fight will go on in my absence. It will be some 90 miles S.W. of here. I recd. a long letter this morning from Frank¹ He says Lamon² is at work with the President; and that Mr. Lincoln would make the promotion at once if he could say in justification of himself that I had distinguished myself in battle.— I think he could say it if they'd only give me a chance in.—

Frank writes me encouragingly about it anyhow— and I feel sure when Davis & Swett get to W. [Washington] the matter will be fixed.—

I woke this morning with one of my old fashioned colds in the head. I cannot imagine how I got it— It is better however this evening— and by morning I will be all O.K. again.=

Judge Davis is strongly of opinion that if this war is not closed by spring, the civilized world will interfere & stop it.

¹ Orme, Frank D., (1836-1903) a younger brother of Col. Orme.

² Lamon, Ward Hill (1828-1893) was at this time Marshal of the District of Columbia. He was a close friend of the President, and as his personal bodyguard had free access to the White House.

It cannot be closed by spring — By June or July it might be fought out if we had some different men in command

McClellan in Virginia & Buell in Ky. have ruined the country in my opinion. The manner in which they have conducted the war is outrageous; and it would have done better if left to run itself.

There will be a terrible reckoning for them in the future.—

I am truly glad Genl. Oglesby³ was not killed— What delightful obituaries he can read of himself in almost every paper. I like Dick, he is a magnificent fellow. I have nothing more to-night—

Oh yes! Howard got a letter from Fanny⁴ this morning enclosing a very good picture of your father— He gave it to me to keep for him— I will have quite a picture gallery =

Write me often — Kiss our dear children — Admonish them to be good— very good— Remember me to every one enquiring about me— Amos Barnard is yet here— My love to Fanny & yr. Mother, but, dearer than all, my ever fresh love to the darling one who calls me

Husband

Hd. Qrs. Springfield Mo.

In Camp —

Novr. 7 1862

My dear wife —

I neglected writing you yesterday because I was engaged in moving my quarters = Genl. Schofield returned here yesterday — The whole army is on the return here. They have made a long weary march to no good.

What will be the next move I cannot tell. I hope however a “forward to Little Rock” — I have moved out to my tent — and I have fixed up this morning in fine style— I have a nice plank floor, and good fire place in the tent, with

³ Oglesby, Richard J., (1824-1899). He was severely wounded in the lung at Corinth. He was thrice Governor of Illinois, and represented the State in the United States Senate, 1873-79.

⁴ Fanny McCullough, sister-in-law of Col. Orme. Recipient of a fine letter of condolence from President Lincoln, Dec. 1862, on the death of her father, William McCullough, Col. of Fourth Illinois Cavalry.

a huge old chimney stalking up on the outside large enough to do credit to a large log cabin.—

You ought to see our camp with its 300 tents & every tent with a large brick chimney to it.— And then you ought to see the inside of our tents, how nice, clean & snug — My tent is arranged thus: outside view— of the Colonel's tent—

[Rough sketch of hospital type tent with chimney at one end; hitching post back of tent with 'Old Joe' tied to it and figure of guard with gun on his shoulder standing near by.]

Inside view: that will be a little harder to draw but I will try— I will make it on a larger scale — here it is just as I am in it now —

[Interior shows fireplace; figure of the Colonel at his desk writing 'this letter'. On one side is pictured 'my cot', on the other a saddle rack with saddle and sword hanging on it; underneath is a valise and nearby a washbasin on a stool. The colonel's overcoat hangs on the tent pole.]

There I believe I have given you an accurate and rather a life like and well drawn sketch of my present head quarters, inside & out = I only wish you were here to see them— I am sure you would say it was very comfortable.—

I recd. a nice long letter from Judge Davis this morning—. I enclose it to you for perusal and to keep for me. It does me good to get such a letter.—

Your letter enclosing the stamps reached me safely.— The Paymaster has not yet come— I wish you would ascertain from Mr. Prince¹ for me who paid the \$33. which you recd. so that I may know. I am glad you recd. it. =

Everything continues quiet & dull here. "No leaves of absence except by permission of the Secty of War" is the order now. I have a slight notion of writing to Washington and making application for leave of absence to visit Illinois in December— Were it not for my men, who cannot get away on any pretext I would not hesitate = As it is I don't like to do it, but if we remain here all winter I will try & get back, because I can just as well be absent as not, but I hope

¹ Prince, Ezra M. Began the practice of law in Bloomington, Illinois in 1856. Prince and Clifton H. Moore, of Clinton, Ill. took care of the law business of the firm of Swett & Orme in their absence.

before long we will march for Little Rock.— I think we can just as well take that place & winter there as not.— I vote for it decidedly— I don't know what sort of a general I'd make or what sort of a fight I'd make, but it seems to me I would move, and keep moving. The army of the Potomac is not doing much. And as if to make matters worse, I see that Mrs McClellan has gone to war with her husband— Only think of that! I have no hope at all now. It does seem to me as if the wives of officers & man ought to keep out of camps & garrisons in time of war— Several officers in this army have taken their wives trudging along in this last march— It almost made me mad to see it— It is as much as a man can do to take care of himself without having also to take care of his wife on such a campaign.—

Swett's beaten! The Democracy have carried everything, and I think the Country is ruined.— The result of these elections will palsy the arm of the president & make him too feeble to act energetically— Poor Swett I am sorry for him— But I was prepared for his defeat, as I feared it some time— I rejoice that I am not at home to share the disgrace of the defeat.— And I feel proud to know that I have been engaged in the field for my Country, and not dabbling in this last dirty political mess.— I can scarcely foresee the effects of this election. It will nerve the rebels to redoubled energy.— Only think! James C. Allen² the member elect for the State at large promised that the war shd. end in 6 months if he was elected. Josh Allen³ in the South part of the State is almost an armed secessionist & has been in Ft. Lafayette in prison. Jno Stuart has no heart in this contest, and so with all the Democracy = But stop! I should not write you such a letter— Nannie. Excuse me for doing so, However it wont hurt. It is all true— But you don't care about politics, and hereafter neither will I. If I am

² Allen, James C. of Palestine, Illinois was a Representative for the State at Large in the Thirty-Eighth Congress, 1863-1865.

³ William Joshua Allen (1829-1901) had openly proposed to John A. Logan to divide Illinois so that 'Egypt' might consider the possibility of joining the Southern Confederacy. He was arrested along with a half dozen other prominent Illinoisans in August, 1862 and held prisoner for some months at Cairo and in the 'Old Capitol Prison' at Washington.

only suffered to live quietly in my own dear home I shall hereafter pay no regard to political contests.— Still there is a charm about the bitter political contest that it is hard to resist— But with your aid I will resist it. Good bye— Write me often — Kiss the dear ones— Kiss them many many times for me. Remember me to all enquiring friends & continue to enjoy and amuse yourself until once more you may rest in the embrace of your affectionate husband —

Wm. W. O.

Camp Curtis — Mo. 12 miles S of
Springfield—Nov 28 1862

Dearest wife—

Yesterday was Thanksgiving day, and was so kept & observed by our Regiment— In the forenoon we had religious services by our Chaplain Guthrie—¹ We had a Thanksgiving dinner at 3 O'Clock in the afternoon— The Bill of fare was:

Cove oyster Soup—with crackers

Pickles—Salt & Pepper

& dried apple sauce

Stewed Squirrels—

with dried apple sauce

Roast Turkey—without stuffing

but with dried apple sauce—

Hot *Yellow* biscuit— Soda Crackers— Butter— Molasses
and dried apple sauce

Dessert—Dried apple pie —

Fresh apple pie —

Stewed dried apples —

Coffee — Tea —

No milk

So you see we had a fine dinner, altho we are out in the woods.— . . . I am getting along very well — Sometimes I get very tired of the monotony of camp life — Then again I like it. — I prefer to be moving.—

¹ Guthrie, Robert E. Enlisted in Bloomington, August 14, 1862; resigned June 29, 1863.

I have no news here— How long we will remain here I cannot tell— or where we may go when we move I cannot surmise.

I learn of a change in this Department by the removal of Genl. Curtis and placing Genl. Pope in his stead— If this is true² it will cause some delay in our movements of course— It may occasion a reorganization of this army and a change in my position.— Army movements are so changeable that when a man goes to sleep at night he does not know what shape he'll be in in the morning. Last night Col. McNulta received a serenade on the strength of the news received in camp that he was a father.³ The weather is threatening a change— For two or three days it has been very cloudy— and the wind blows cool.—

I suppose soon we will have winter on us in earnest. Joe, Charley & Howard are very well =

. . . The boys here have a song called 'Home again!' which they often sing and you may be sure I enter fully into the spirit of it — How I would now love to see you and be "Home again!" Good bye dearest wife—

Your affectionate husband
Wm. W. O.

Camp Curtis — Mo.
Nov. 29 1862

Dearest wife —

It is now half past seven O'Clock Saturday night— The band is now playing the regular evening tattoo, and everything has the sound of martial life; but it is nothing unusual.—

By the way did you know that in our camp life we move by the music of the band — We rise in the morning by the

² Pope, John (1822-1892). This was only a rumor as Pope following his defeat at the second Battle of Bull Run was sent to the northwest to carry on the war against the Sioux Indians.

Curtis, Samuel R., (1807-1866). Major General Curtis commanded the Department of Missouri, 1862-1863.

³ McNulta, John, Lieutenant-Colonel of the 94th. On August 20, 1862; he took command of the regiment a few days after it was mustered in, Col. Orme taking command of the Brigade. He was promoted to Colonel, and afterwards brevetted brigadier-general. The occasion for rejoicing was the birth of Herbert, the eldest of his four children.

tune the band plays at Reveille, and we go to bed by the martial music at tattoo and taps.

There are some things delightfully pleasant in camp life, and some things terribly monotonous.—

This morning I rode out to the Wilson Creek battle ground, and saw the spot where Lyon¹ fell.— The trees were once full of bullets, but they (the bullets) have been cut out & carried off as keepsakes. I have no particular fancy for such mementoes; I desire to leave all bullets behind & bring none home with me — I hope I may be so fortunate.

I recd your dear letter of the 24th last evening— I regret to hear of old Mrs. Hill's illness; but she is now quite an old lady, and considering the labor & exposure she has endured the measure of her life must be nearly full.—

I am glad to hear you have determined to be happy as you can during my absence; that does one more good than anything else.—I will be home safe and sound, dearest, and we will live the happier after my return on account of this necessary absence Do then enjoy yourself as much as possible, be happy & make the children happy— Live for the future before us—all will be bright & cheerful when I return— We will both be the prouder of each other, and absence will only increase our loves.— I shall feel the more a man, and look on you as a true heroine— And when again I appear at the head of my dear dear household, you can throw off a load of care that will make you feel, fresh, boyant & young as ever. Nothing, my love, would have induced me to part from you, from our dear little ones, from that happy home I have been proud to call mine, except the terrible state of the Country. Of this you are well aware. I could scarcely have felt myself a man in the future had I not as I have done sacrificed all and shown my desire at least to aid my country in this death struggle for her existence. And I know that you must feel in this respect as I do.— Life is worth but little dearest, where self respect is lost.—

¹ Lyon, Nathaniel, (1818-1861). Prominent leader in the contest between the Unionist and Secessionists in Missouri. He was instantly killed while leading a charge on August 10, 1861 at the battle of Wilson's Creek, in southwestern Missouri.

Now, the future may come whatever may be its cast, whatever fate it may bring to our unfortunate country! I shall feel that I have done my duty, or at least what I conceived to be my duty.

You ask me about myself; well! I'll tell you how I live now. I go to bed when I feel like it; sometimes at 7, sometimes at 9, sometimes later — There being no limit to the hours of an officer. My bed consists of my cot laid on the ground flat for the purposes of warmth; it being warmer on the ground than if raised on the legs. I have two blankets and my buffalo robe under me, and three blankets over me— If the night is very cool I throw my overcoat over my feet.— I sleep very soundly— I am not troubled with much undressing or dressing as I only take off my coat, vest and boots. I rise in the morning at various hours from 6 to 8 O'Clk. Ike, (or Zach. is his proper name— Zachariah Lawson —) comes into my tent about daylight and starts a fire in my little camp stove— brings me water to wash in, blacks my boots &c.— My camp stove is a little round sheet iron drum, set flat on the ground with a little stove pipe running out of the side of the tent.— Ike has spread a piece of bagging by the side of my cot for a carpet. So you see I live in fine style.— Breakfast is announced at about 8 O'Clk. Dinner about 1, and supper about 6— Sometimes we have a plenty to eat and sometimes we dont.— To night we had mush and milk.— The ordinary routine of camp duties, such as business drill &c. occupies the day; & so day after day while away—while we wonder each succeeding day when and where we'll march. I take a ride every day; pay my respects to the general, trot around the camp &c. & back to my quarters—

It is now after 8' O'clock— I am getting sleepy— We are all well and hearty— There is nothing new— Kiss the dear ones Tell me if Willy & Berny read their letters themselves— My love to all at home— And as for yourself you possess me entirely my constant love & thoughts —

As ever devotedly yours Wm.

Camp near Cassville Mo.

Decr 4 1862

My dear wife —

After a hard & rough days march of 27 miles and being tired to my fingers ends, I have only time to say to you that we are moving into Arkansas—

Yesterday at 2 P. M., we struck our tents at Camp Curtis & marched 17 miles —getting into camp about 9 O'Clock at night— By the time we got supper it was midnight— Of course I was busy all the time with camp matters— At midnight marching orders were issued to move at 4 O'Clk this morning— In order to do so we had to be up at 2 O'Clock in the morning—

At about 1 O'Clock I laid down on the side of a Rocky Hill, my feet to a rousing fire, & without tent or shelter except my blankets took a right good nap— It froze ice about half inch thick— & the frost was very heavy. My little moustache was quite frosty when I got up— I would not have believed I could have slept so well out doors in such a cold night— I eat breakfast at 3 O'Clk this morning, took my saddle at 3½ O Clk & have been in it all day— so you may imagine I am tired. It is now about 7 O Clk & I am waiting supper— We are near the little town of Cassville & will march at 5 O Clk in the morning— This will necessitate our rising at 3— I am feeling well— only tired— The march to-day has been very hard on the men— We will reach Elkhorn Tavern to-morrow night— Love to all— Kiss the dear little ones, Remember & pray for me—

As ever devotedly, Nannie your husband

Camp on Illinois Creek

10 Miles South of Fayetteville

Arkansas

Decr. 9 1862

My dear wife—

This morning's sun arises in splendor and finds me to some extent rested & refreshed after a very fatiguing march and hard fought battle.

We left Cassville on the Morning of the 5th at 5 O'Clock and marched from there to Sugar Creek this side of the old Pea Ridge battle ground¹ where Lt. Dolloff was wounded— on the morning of the 6th of Decr. we started from Sugar Creek and marched to Fayetteville which place we reached about midnight, and left at 4 the next morning— We marched about 6 miles from Fayetteville going South when our advance guard of cavalry was attacked by a large number of the enemy and scattered— Word was sent me to hurry up my infantry and artillery— I came forward as rapidly as possible— The artillery was posted ready for action, and the infantry moved up along the road.— After some skirmishing the enemy retired— We marched on two miles farther to Illinois Creek, and found the enemy 20 000 strong under Gen. Hindman² strongly placed on the hills across the creek.— I was ordered to move my infantry across the creek and place them under the bluffs so as to protect them from the enemy's artillery.— I moved the 94th across the Creek to the left of the road, and the 19th Iowa to the right of the road— The artillery of my Brigade was then brought across the creek and well posted. I rode up on the hill & could plainly see the enemy's artillery and infantry. Our batteries opened on them, and then commenced the music— The battle had begun. The artillery roared, the shell whistled through the air, and the timber crashed as it was struck by the huge balls.— My bay horse (not the one I brought from home) stood perfectly unconcerned, and I confess I felt much less apprehension than I expected— About the second or third round a cannon ball or shell passed so close to my side as to knock off my hat and throw me from my saddle.— The boys thought I was struck— but I was unharmed, nothing but the wind of the ball reaching me.— The ball passed on and cut in two a large tree standing almost behind me. But our artillery soon silenced theirs— Then the infantry

¹ A battle fought in northwest Arkansas, March 7 and 8, 1862. The result of this first battle west of the Mississippi saved Missouri to the Union cause. This Lt. Dolloff was probably Samuel F. Dolloff of Co. I, First Cavalry of Illinois.

² Hindman, Thomas C., (1818-1868). Promoted to a Major General at the Battle of Shiloh; he was transferred to Arkansas.

was moved up and the musketry began— Oh! but it was a hard fight— I was in nearly every part of the field— I had four mounted orderlies with me— The bullets whistled around us thick, and one of my orderlies who was right by my side was shot through the arm.— I did not receive a scratch nor did Burr³ who was with me all the time = About 4 O'Clock I thought things looked blue. You must remember we did not have but about 4 000 effective infantry troops. But Genl. Blunt⁴ who was below us at Cane Hill 8 miles off and to whose relief we were going came in about 4 and pitched in with us and we flaxed them out nicely— Night rested on the battle undecided— We slept on our arms— or rather did not sleep, but laid out without camp fires or any comforts— The boys had nothing to eat but hard crackers— My wagon did not come up but by invitation of the General, Herron I took supper & breakfast with him, & thus got along very well— I slept two or three hours on the bare ground with my feet to the General's camp fire— At three O'Clock in the morning we were awakened by the sound of a bugle which announced the arrival of a flag of truce from the rebels under General Marmaduke⁵, one of the rebel Generals.— We were all up at once— The regiments were placed in line, ready for action, and so continued until noon.— At that time it was announced as the result of the flag of truce, that the rebels acknowledged their defeat, and had left the field, leaving us in full possession— Our men were all so foot sore & weary from heavy marches & want of rest that we could not follow them— And we are now camped on the battle ground.— I rode all over the ground and viewed the result of the fight— Oh but it was a hard sight— Rebels and union men laid together promiscuously— The rebels were all dressed in butternut colored clothes— Many of them had

³ Burr, Hudson, (1830-1891). Adjutant of 94th. Enlisted at Bloomington, Illinois, August 18, 1862.

⁴ Blunt, James G., (1826-1881). In November 1862 he was made a major-general and placed in command of the Department of Kansas. His victory at Prairie Grove checked the advance of the Confederates into Missouri.

⁵ Marmaduke, John S., (1833-1887). Colonel of an Arkansas regiment at Shiloh. Wounded there and while recovering promoted to brigadier-general. Commanded the cavalry at Price's defense of Little Rock. Major General in 1864; and captured in General Price's Missouri raid.

only ears of corn in their haversacks.— The woods were full of hogs, and during the night they had terribly mangled many of the bodies.— I have been so incessantly in the saddle, and so long without proper rest, that I am very tired indeed— There has never been a harder time soldiering, or a much harder battle than we have had during the past five or six days. The battle was fought on Sunday Decr. 7th; but the rebels made the attack on us. This is a beautiful country— none to excel it— and it has everything in it good. Plenty of sheep, hogs, and cattle & plenty of corn & wheat.— We will have no difficulty in subsisting here.— How long we may remain here I cannot now say.— Our Regiment only lost one man killed, and 32 wounded— with one man missing— All the field officers behaved well & came off unharmed Burr is all right— Joe, Charley & Howard are uninjured. Joe & Charley behaved well =

You can see by my writing that I am very much tired— I am trying to get you a dispatch through— Whether I will succeed or not I cannot now tell—

Good bye— I have not heard from you for a week or two— but I have no doubt you are all well. I have great faith that your prayers for my safety have turned from me many bullets and preserved me so far— I would not have missed the battle for anything— Remember me to all my friends— Say to them that the 94th behaved gallantly— and gloriously sustained the honor of old McLean and the reputation of the State. Kiss the dear, dear children— & for yourself be assured of my constant love & remembrance— Even in the heat of battle I thought of you—

Devotedly dearest Your husband

Camp — Prairie Grove
10 miles S. of Fayetteville Arks.
Dec. 10th 1862 —

My dear wife =

I telegraphed & wrote you yesterday— You doubtless had news of the battle before you recd. my dispatch— and of

course you were in some suspense to learn my fate— However I am in hopes that to-day my telegram has relieved your suspense. —

Last night I recd. your letter of Nov. 30th & this morning your good long letter of the 2d Decr. reached me— So you see our mail facilities are pretty good after all— I will therefore revoke the instructions I sent you to write not oftener than once a week, and say: write as often as you choose— I will do the same, which will be as often as I can, considering the circumstances surrounding me =

This is beautiful weather— I am to-day having no fire— the sun is so warm— At night however we have heavy frosts.—

Our battle is called the battle of “Prairie Grove” and was much more severe in its results than at first supposed— Our loss in killed & wounded will amount to at least 1000. The rebels have lost twice as many

Wednesday — Decr. 11

While writing the above I was stopped by other matters, and this morning I resume the labor of love and affection of communing with you by letter. Today the prospect is good for a storm The wind blows hard, and the sky is overcast with clouds. I am feeling tolerably well— much, very much better than I had dared hope after the fatiguing march & severe battle we have had. = I believe I wrote you that from the time I left Wilson’s Creek — Camp Curtis — until the next night after the battle making six days and nights I did not take off even my spurs or overcoat; but whenever I got a chance to sleep I laid down with all my harness on.— If any one had told me I could have endured so much I would have doubted it, and I know you, dearest, would not have credited it;— especially after my recent illness— I am very glad to hear that you are bearing up so well under my absence— You are indeed, dearest, a noble & true woman— And our future life will be the happier and

¹ Sometimes called Fayetteville, and Illinois Creek.

pleasanter by our now temporary absence from each other on the occasion demanding it.—

I do not know what you will do about your help — Look around & see if you can find some one to suit you. A man & his wife will do better for you than a girl. They can divide the labors & suit you better. I should think you would have no difficulty in obtaining the necessary help. They all like to live with you.==

There is nothing of especial importance here since the battle— All the wounded have been sent back to Fayetteville The dead are not yet all buried.— Joe visited some of the rebel hospitals day before yesterday and met a Rebel Surgeon who was an old college classmate of his at Georgetown—² They recognized each other immediately. The rebels are reported to have fallen back to VanBuren in Arkansas some 30 miles from here— They were badly whipped— And I don't think they will like soon to fight us again.— I enclose you a genuine copy of Genl' Hindman's address to his troops before the battle— It was taken from a rebel soldier. After you read it send it over with my compliments to the Editors of the Pantagraph for publication—

Write me fully what reports come home about the battle— What is said about who distinguished themselves &c &c. Send me all extracts from the papers speaking of the battle— I mean our home papers & the Chicago Tribune— I have a curiosity to know what is said &c.

Joe, Charley & Howard are well — This is a nice country through here. We get everything we want; except butter, which is scarce—

We have mutton, pork, honey, flour, corn meal, dried apples in abundance Yesterday I got some potatoes and onions.— These things cost but little, as we send out foraging parties to take them.

The boys have a great deal of confederate money, printed in St. Louis, which they use to purchase things The natives here prefer confederate money to Green backs and as the

² Georgetown College, Washington, D. C.

confederate money costs nothing to the boys they get what they want without expense.

Which way we will go I cannot say— But I presume we will get ready to follow up the rebels— We can chase them out of Arkansas if the weather keeps good. We have a gallant little army gathered here, and we can whip the rebel army in front of us at any time they will give us a chance—

I have had a great longing to see a battle as you are aware— Now I have had my curiosity gratified We have had one of the hardest fights and most brilliant victories of the war.— I think when you read the accounts you will concede the fact that we have had a “big fight”.—

Remember me to all friends at home. My love to Fanny & your mother— Kiss all the children the dear little ones for me— Kiss them many many times— I am so sorry to learn that they are even slightly sick. Did Berny read her letter by herself.—

Tell little Fanny her brother Jimmy is safe.— And as for yourself dearest wife, be of good cheer & strong spirits— Enjoy yourself & be as happy as you can— Rest in the assurance of my constant love and remembrance of you. My life without you to fasten my thoughts upon would be indeed dark but as long as I can turn my mind homeward and see your dear face and almost at this distance hear your warm cheerful voice, I can still feel strong & happy, though absent from you.—

Write me whenever opportunity presents. Give me all the gossip.— In your prayers thank God for my preservation and command your husband to his safe keeping— The prayers of so good and pure a wife are heard by him who has us all in his keeping—

Good bye, dearest. I long for the day when I may turn my steps homeward, again to meet you and our dear little children—

Good bye—

Your devoted husband—

[The 94th lay in camp in the beautiful valley where the battle of Prairie Grove was fought until the 27th of December. A raid was made forty miles to the southwest against

the town of Van Buren, Arkansas. Early in January the regiment moved up to Lake Spring, Mo., twelve miles from Rolla.]

[During the next three months there was little activity except of a social nature as relatives and friends came down from McLean County for visits. On June 3rd the regiment began its ten day journey to Vicksburg to help Grant, who, "finding he couldn't take it without the Ninety-Fourth" asked for reenforcements.]

Head Quarters, Army of the Frontier

Rolla — June 3 1863

My dear wife—

Last night at 8 O'Clk I recd. marching orders to move for Vicksburg = After being up all night I marched into town this morning, and we are now making arrangements to take the cars for St. Louis where boats will be ready to move us immediately South —

I snatch this hurried moment to drop you this line — If time permits I will write you from St. Louis. I would telegraph you to come down to St. Louis, but my movements are so rapid & uncertain that I may not have an hour's time in the City—

I feel well & in good spirits, and am glad of the opportunity to take part in the grand struggle for opening the Mississippi & ending the Rebellion = I shall try to bear myself so that whatever may be my fate you and our dear little ones shall only have reason to be proud of me.— I saw Genl. Herron & first learned from him that you did not stay over in St. Louis as you anticipated—

Good bye for the present— Write me— I will write you from St. Louis surely— Love to all—

As ever your
devoted husband
Wm. W. O.

June 6 1863

On Board Steamer Minnehaha

8 — P.M.

My dear wife—

We have been steaming down the River all day— Last night about ten O'Clock we laid by, on account of the shoal water— and to-night we do the same thing.

The water is so low that the pilots think it unsafe to run at night—

To morrow we will reach Cairo — so you see we travel very slowly— After leaving Cairo we will have less difficulties to encounter and will run night & day.=

I dont think we can reach Vicksburg for at least four days after leaving Cairo— Our boat is very heavily loaded and runs slowly =

I should like very much to have you along; and indeed you might just as well be along as not— Our boat will stop at Cairo some hours to take on coal; and if you were along you could get off there, and take the [Illinois] Central road home .— But then it would be a long tiresome ride for you on the Central road, and it may be the best as it is.— I have already caused you to travel so much that I know you must need rest and quiet. =

I would like very much now to have my map of the Mississippi River— it is a fine map & I could use it to much advantage.=

Direct your letter to me thus

“Brig. Genl. Wm. W. Orme

Care of Maj. Genl. Herron

Haines Bluff

Mississippi ”

Via Cairo—”

I have no news my dear at all— I enclose to you the Photograph of Aunt Jane Boone. (now Haswell)= When my cards reach you send me a few of each kind. = Also send one to Mrs Davies¹ at Rolla with your compliments— Send a few to Frank, one to Mrs Littleton of course, and give my friends in Bloomington a copy— Judge Davis should have one = Send one to Mrs Col. Laughlin² with your regards, and request one of her husband's = If you run short get some copies made.—Call on Col. Roe,³ and say to him for me,

¹ Mrs. Davies with whom Col. Orme boarded when stationed near Rolla, Mo.

² Mrs. Col. Laughlin was the wife of Lieutenant-Colonel Rankin G. Laughlin of the 94th. He enlisted from Heyworth, Illinois.

³ Roe, Edward R. Dr. Lieutenant-colonel of the Thirty-Third Illinois regiment, was severely wounded in the assault upon Vicksburg on May 22, 1863, which caused his discharge.

that I sympathize with him in his suffering & he has my best wishes for speedy recovery. Give my love to all at home— and to the Judge & Mrs Davis.— Present Judge Scott⁴ a copy of my photograph.

Kiss the little ones often for me— I have now been away two months, and I long to see them— And for your dear self Nannie, live comfortably and happily. Remember that the chances of my return are very largely in my favor, and the future will compensate us both for our present separation. Receive my best & all my love and write often to your husband who ever dreams & thinks of you— Good Night—
Wm.W.O.

On Board Steamer Minnehaha
30 Miles above Memphis
Monday night — June 8/63
8 P. M. —

Dearest Nannie —

Our near approach to Memphis reminds me of the still increasing distance between us, and of the opportunity there to mail you a letter.

I expect to reach the City in about three hours— it will be an unseasonable hour when we arrive but I suppose we will lay-to there all night, for the purpose of taking on coal &c.— We are going along very slowly. It was Friday night when we left St Louis about 7 P.M. and now it is Monday night, and we are not yet at Memphis—

Our men are all in pretty good shape;— and we have thus far had no serious accident.— You remember that I consider Friday a lucky day in my calendar; I therefore augur success in our expedition from the fact that we embarked on Friday. =

But, my dear wife, as the distance increases between us and the long winding line of the River is left behind me, my affection for, and sweet memories of you, seem to draw you nearer to me.—

⁴ Scott, John M. Judge on the Eighth Judicial Circuit in Illinois, 1862-1867. Member of the Supreme Court of Illinois, 1870-1888.

This is my first trip down the Mississippi below Cairo— And altho' in days past I had often to myself planned a trip Southward on this river and perhaps often suggested it to you, yet in my wildest roams of fancy I never dreamed that the occasion of my travel would be what it now is.— The future had promised me means and leisure for the fullest indulgences of pleasure and comfort on a visit South in company with you— and in imagination the Banks of this grand old river were but changing scenes of beautiful landscape where wealth & taste had joined their efforts to produce and create all that could charm or please.— That future had seemingly arrived— I had the means and the leisure to enjoy such a trip in your company and I am now on the “Father of Waters—” but you are absent.— The beautiful scenery is changed into thick coverts for an unseen foe; and in lieu of watching closely for the picturesque and the beautiful we scan the shore closely to discover if aught be there to do us harm.—

Below Memphis I learn that the boats are frequently fired into from the Arkansas shore— but I fear no harm.— The same kind Providence who has held me thus far thro' life in the hollow of his hand and not only protected me but showered almost every blessing upon me, (and none greater than the bestowal of so pure, good and kind a wife as her I love and esteem to care for and protect) still has my life in his keeping.— And I am satisfied to bide his will in all things— My life will be spared until God ordains it to cease— But I shall ever pray that he may restore me to your embrace that we may enjoy life together until our cup shall be full, and we sink down together in death—

On the river I can get no news.— If I hear anything at Memphis I will write you.— Write me often— Remember also that we are now so far apart that we cannot expect to be in as close communication as heretofore.— You must not then think to chide me for not writing you as often as I would were we nearer, & under different circumstances.

Dont fail to enjoy yourself & be happy and comfortable— Believe no reports concerning me until you receive reliable and authentic information— If aught happens to me and I still live I will have full particulars written you.— So that you will know the worst long before any one else.— False reports will only grieve you without cause — My love to all— Kiss the dear little ones—

Your affectionate husband
Wm.W.O.

In sight of Vicksburg
Friday 6 A.M.
June 12 [1863]

My dear wife —

While our boat is unloading I have barely time to say I am well— We reached here last night at about 6 O'Clock— Had a fine view of the City from 6 O'Clock till midnight by the mortar boats— We could see the shells from the time they left the guns until they fell in the City — There! another shell has just been thrown and the sound just reached me— It is a grand scene— Oh! how I wish you could witness it =

To day we take up our line of march from Young's Point¹ to a place opposite Warrenton and there we'll be ferried across to Warrenton,² where we will form the extreme left of the Grand line of investment— During our march to-day we pass in range of some of the Vicksburg Batteries— But I fear no harm nor must you—

Rumors of all sorts are current here— among others that Jeff Davis is in Vicksburg— If so he is gone up— The City proper, I mean the citizens have requested Genl. Pemberton³ to surrender, but he refuses— There is no telling how long things will be as they are—

My love to all— I would not miss this occasion for anything— I am well & feel well. Howard & Charley are

¹ Young's Point is about five miles up the river from Vicksburg, though nearly due west because of bends in the Mississippi River.

² Warrenton—a small town ten miles down the river, southwest of Vicksburg, Miss.

³ Pemberton, John C. (1814-1881). Lieutenant-General in command of defense of Vicksburg.

well— I can't say when this letter will reach you, or how soon I can write again— But remember that I am with you in all the ardent emotions of your heart—

With many hopes that we shall soon meet again never to part in life I am my dear wife as ever your devoted husband.

Wm. W. O.

Head Quarters Orme's Brigade — Herron's Divn.
Camp 2½ Miles S. of Vicksburg

June 15 1863

Monday — 7 — A.M.

My dear wife—

Since writing you on the boat in front of Vicksburg I have had very continuous and hard work—

We reached Young's Point on Thursday night and disembarked on Friday morning. (My Friday) At noon Friday we had to march across Young's Point to pass Vicksburg and its batteries which command the River— It was six miles across the point— to a point opposite Warrenton— I enclose you a rough map showing our route which by comparison with a good map at home you can see where we are exactly— That Mississippi River map will give you a clear idea of the matter—

We have marched into position on the left of the line which places us South of the City— The City is very closely invested and the rebels have all been driven within their fortifications.— I never saw a point so naturally adapted for a strong defense as this— Every hill and ravine could be held against great odds; but as it now is we have all of the advantages—

The sun is scorching hot, but my old white hat is a great protection— I have thus far kept very well, and feel very well.— Yesterday in company with General Herron & Genl. Lauman,¹ I went to the front line of our outposts— There is warm work all along the line— We were fired at as soon

¹ Brig. Gen. J. G. Lauman was removed from command of the Fourth Division, Sixteenth Army Corps and assigned to Thirteenth Corps, to report to Gen. Grant at Vicksburg, July 12, 1863. War of the Rebellion Records, Series I, Vol. 22, part 2.

as we got out to the front and the balls whistled closely around us, but no harm was done—

Our camps here are all in the Ravines and on the side of the Hills which afford the most protection against the enemy's shells— They fired but little however and do no damage— From all I can learn the Rebel soldiers have everything necessary except percussion caps, to obtain which they resort to every device— Nine men were captured a day or two ago endeavoring to go into the rebel lines with 180,000 gun caps.— In the city the people all live in caves in the earth to avoid injury from our shells— I have heard that many women & children have been killed there. It is their fault however. When Gen Grant first invested the city he sent in word that the women and children might be sent out before he commenced bombarding, but they scornfully refused to leave the City— After some days bombarding the rebels sent out asking permission to send out their women & children, but Gen. Grant rightfully refused to let them come out. =

It seems to me that in a week or ten days they must surrender— The water here is very poor— I have to send off nearly a mile to get water that I can drink.— While I am writing you the bombardment is going on very briskly all around the line— And I have got so that I scarcely notice the sound of the cannon.— I have heard nothing from home for eight or ten days— I expect some letters at Haines Bluff² to-day & I will send over for them—

My love to all of our family— Your mother and Fanny. Howard is well & doing well = Kiss all the dear one's, our sweet little children & keep me perpetually in their remembrance— Your own dear affection keeps me in good spirits, and I only hope that my ardent love for you may at least serve to make my absence tolerable = The day is rapidly arriving, when I shall be able again to return to our happy home; and I hope to bring back honors which will compensate you & me for this painful absence from you = You

² Haines Bluff is some fifteen miles above Vicksburg, where the bluff abuts on the Yazoo River.

Know, my dear Nannie, that life is burdensome to me unless I can take my share in the duties, responsibilities and honors of the country— I seek no political honor, nor will I have any— But it is an honor to be able to say that in her hour of need I have served my country — There are so many things I have to write you about concerning this country & what I have seen here that I must defer them for another hour when times does not press me.—

My regards to all my friends who enquire after me.— I have seen many Bloomington men here— Wickizer³ is 16 miles away from me but I have sent him word to come over & see me.— He is stationed on a boat on the Yazoo River—

You may show this letter to Judge Davis as I cannot for a day or two write another.— Write me often & give me full news.— My dear wife, good bye until I write again.

Devotedly yours

Wm. W.O.

Head Quarters Herron's Division

Orme's Brigade

Camp 2½ miles S. of Vicksburg

June 18 1863

My dearest Nannie—

I have been so busy for two or three days past as to be unable to devote the time necessary to the pleasure of writing you.— Day before yesterday I recd. your letter of June 2d. which was written the day before you met me at St. Louis— However it was a great pleasure to me to read it.— Last night I slept soundly— Night before that I was up all night, and the night before that still I had but little sleep. However I am quite well. But the heat is very oppressive to me. I perspire very freely and so much that it makes me feel very weak sometimes—

³ Wickizer, (Capt.) John H. A lawyer of Bloomington, Illinois. Assistant Quartermaster, Nov. 4, 1861—July 28, 1865.

Yesterday I recd. a call from Captain Wickizer who took breakfast with me, and later in the day Col. Giles A. Smith¹ called to see me and took dinner with me.— They were both very well— I have not seen a newspaper since I have been here—

My camp is 2½ miles from the Vicksburg Court house— and about one mile from the enemy's batteries. They throw shells among us occasionally but do no damage— We camp close under the hills so that their missiles cannot reach us.

Night before last I moved my front line of skirmishers forward some distance, and it is now within 200 yards of the enemy's works.— The 94th in the night time took one of the enemy's rifle pits and captured four prisoners. =

Firing goes on continually along the front— I visit the front about twice a day, exercising great care however in my movements, as the balls of the enemy whistle through the trees very lively all the time. It seems to be the prevailing opinion here that the City will surrender before many days.— But there is no way of guessing at it very closely. The water around here is very poor; the inhabitants use cistern water mostly— Every house is provided with a very large cistern.— The variety of bugs here would astonish you, at night my tent is full of all kinds of bugs, insects, spiders &c. I am covered all over my body with large red lumps occasioned by the bite of some kind of a bug— said to be the "jigger". The bumps itch me very much & make me feel very uncomfortably— But it is nothing when you get used to it. =

I have no news of interest— All sorts of rumors are prevalent, but nothing reliable is known to me. Gen. Grant said yesterday that the City would surrender in three days— so I heard— But I am sure there is no means of making a sure guess. I hope to receive some mail from you in a day or two.— I have written this not knowing exactly when it will reach you, but will send it by first opportunity. Howard is

¹ Smith, Giles A. (1829-1876) of Bloomington, Illinois. In his report of July 6, 1863 General Sherman said; "In making special mention of Col. Giles A. Smith, commanding First brigade, I but repeat former expressions of praise." He was promoted to Brigadier-General, August 4, 1863; Major-General, November 24, 1865.

well— so is Charley & Jimmy. Love to all at home— Kiss our little children for me— & write me, my dear wife, as often as you can— for the only pleasant moments of my absence are when I receive letters from you, and the pleasant recollections of home & the loved ones there cluster strongly around me— Good bye dearest one— & remember & pray for constantly

Yr devoted husband

Wm. W.O.

Brigade Headquarters
Camp 2½ Miles S. of Vicksburg
June 20th 1863—

Saturday night

My dear good wife—

On account of the delay in forwarding letters from here I have not written for two days— Since I wrote you the other day I received your nice letter of the 9th— How glad I was to hear from you & of your safe arrival at home;— that home at which before very long I hope to arrive safe & sound myself— Once more there, my dear Nannie, I pledge you never again to leave you, our dear sweet children and our happy happy homestead.—O! for its cool recesses and shady trees, now! for its comforts & luxuries—

This is an awful hot country here full of bugs of all sorts.— The heat is very oppressive indeed— Yesterday morning I was taken with a slight attack of bilious diarrhea, but it wore off without proving serious; and this evening I am as well as usual. We have blackberries here in abundance; they are nice & ripe.— Peaches will be ripe in four or five days.

I am now suffering terribly from the effects of mosquitos & other bugs— I am full of bites all over. There is a small insect about the size of a pin's point which bites its way into the flesh & makes a very sore place— This insect is called a "chicker" or "jigger".— We are all suffering from its depredations. They are much worse than the "wood tick"—

I have to stop after every sentence I write to scratch myself & drive off the bugs. =

I have had no letters since my arrival here except from you— but an old one which reached me last night from Frank—

I have written Judge Davis, Scott & Frank.—Charley is very well & so is Howard— The latter is doing very well.— I have thought some of writing Gov. Yates & asking him to give Howard a commission as 2d. Lieut. & then get him discharged as a private to accept his commission. The commission of course would be one that would draw no pay, but it is one I think ought to be given by the State in honor of Col. Mc Cullough. I have made up my mind to try it any way.— Write Howard occasionally it would do him much good to receive a letter from you— And impress upon Fanny the necessity of writing him & me often, very often tell her. She has not much else to do.

. . . I have no news to send you from here. We are still closely investing the city and digging our way nearer to the enemy's forts every night.— This morning at four O'Clock a general cannonade opened all around the line; and the enemy replied throwing their shell in every direction, but doing no damage to us— Our cannonade was kept up for about four hours.— I don't know what the prospect of a surrender is— The rebels hold out well, & it may be a month before they give up, or it may be a week.— So you see there is nothing new & everything is comparatively quiet & dull.=

Kiss the children for me very often— Tell Willy & Berny they each owe me a letter— I think I wrote them last. Lucy's letter will come soon tell her. Remember me to all friends & much love to Fanny & your mother.—

Keep me in constant remembrance & be assured dear Nannie of my increasing love for you & home—

Your devoted husband

Wm. W. O.

Brigade Head Quarters Left Division
 Army of Investment
 Camp below Vicksburg June 22 1863
 8 A.M.— Monday morning

Dearest Nannie =

This is a beautiful Monday morning and the air is pure and cool, and while sitting under the shade of a tree in an easy rocking chair (obtained from the neighboring houses by some of the boys) I was just thinking of you and home.— I was indulging in the pleasant dream that you were gaily and happily pursuing your morning duties in the household while the merry birds were singing in our trees and our happy children, full of innocence and love and scarcely less merry than the birds, were enjoying themselves in the garden.—

I hope it is so, my dear wife; for there is nothing so pleasant to me as to know that you are really happy. You may rest assured my dear Nannie that there is nothing in my camp life of which you would disapprove were you here — And for your dear sake, I shall endeavor to preserve myself until I can once more return under your happy influence. How much I would give to be once more at home, where I could enjoy its peace and quiet, and your pure and ardent love—

I have received no letters from you but the two I have named and I am continually looking for one. We have no news here— Nothing of interest in our army movements. Firing is constantly going on in the front— both musketry and artillery— I have had several narrow escapes but I am very careful.— A day or two ago I was out to the front with several of my officers and after remaining in a position several minutes I remarked to them that I thought it was not prudent to remain longer there; and we walked back some 15 or 20 feet; and just as we reached a large tree a shell exploded just exactly where we stood, but we found safe cover behind the tree. Yesterday afternoon I was again out and took a fine position for observation behind a large tree on a

hill but within reach of the enemy's sharpshooters, and remained there some ten minutes examining their works with my glass— I had scarcely left there when some soldiers came & occupied the same place & one of them was immediately shot.—

I mention these things to show you what the character of the fighting is, and not to alarm you— Because I assure you I am quite prudent and cautious; and I firmly believe that a Divine and overruling Providence carries my life safely along through all these trials to bring me back again to the loved ones at home.— I feel the influence of your prayers, hopes & wishes all the time, my dear Nannie =
I am as well as usual this morning, and am now awaiting a visit from Genl. Herron.— I don't admire this country as much as I did Missouri.— The pure water of Missouri is worth all of this State I have yet seen— Don't be surprised if Vicksburg is not taken for a month or two.— I can't see any good reason why it may not be at least a month before the city is surrendered.

My love to all at home— Here is a big (Kiss) for Lucy and a smaller one (Kiss) for Eddy.— Tell Lucy she is larger than Eddy.— Give Berny & Willy some large kisses for me.— Love to Fanny & yr. Mother. Howard is well— so is Charley. Write me often my dear— And take to yourself the constant and abundant love of one who is happy & proud in being a devoted husband to so excellent and good a wife as my dearest Nannie—

As ever

Wm. W. O.

Brigade Headquarters Left Division
Army of Investment
Camp below Vicksburg June 24, 1863

My dear wife —

Lt. McClun¹ is at my quarters now & is en route for Bloomington — This gives me the happy opportunity of dropping you this short note.

¹ Probably, Lieut. Thomas J. McClung, Co. K Eighth Illinois Infantry.

I am very well, and we are getting along comfortably. The heat is intense for the season & I am in a continual state of perspiration. I have recd. nothing from you later than June 9th. but am in daily expectation of a letter from you—I want one very badly. I hope and pray that you are well and happy— I know you are comfortable, because you have evêrything around you that can give comfort—

I should like very much to see our dear little children—I live very comfortably here We have young chickens frequently & what is more we have milk for our coffee & milk to drink. We have captured a very nice cow that gives us three or four quarts at a milking —

We have just heard this morning of the capture of Port Hudson below us on the River, by Genl. Banks—² There is nothing then to obstruct the river except the place we are besieging, and Vicksburg too will soon fall—

News is old by the time it reaches us.— I have heard of the rebel raids into Pennsylvania— & have seen St. Louis papers of date 19th.—

But I care for no news, except the cheering words I find in your letters— which give me hope & are full of promise of a happy future—

I enclose this note in a “Secesh” envelope,³ of the kind sold in Vicksburg = Everything moves off quietly along the lines, and the rebels are keeping very quiet in our front =

All of your acquaintances are well — Capt. Bradley enquired after you the other day— He an Littleton⁴ are sent down to Warrenton on duty there; that place is some five miles below our Camp.—Give my love to your Mother and Fanny— Kiss the dear little ones who bind us together by ties stronger if possible than our loves & affections. I enclose a big kiss for Lucy and Eddy— Tell Willy to be a very good

² Banks, Nathaniel P., (1816-1894). This was only a rumor as Port Hudson was finally surrendered July 9, 1863, on the receipt of the news that Vicksburg, farther up the river, had been taken by General Grant.

³ This envelope is of ordinary size, but has the appearance of being made of a poor grade of wrapping paper. The ink today is clear and unfaded. In his letter of July 1, 1863 to Wm. Shafer of Bloomington, he says, “sold in Vicksburg at 5 cents each.”

⁴ Henry A. Littleton was detailed to report to Gen. Herron at Springfield, Mo., from Headquarters Third Division of Army of Frontier. War of the Rebellion Records, Series I, Vol. 22, part 2.

boy; and that I was glad to hear from you that he was behaving like a little man— Kiss Berny for me many times— I know she is a nice young lady— Tell them both to write me— Kind regards to all friends— Love to little Fanny & all the family— And remember me only as a devoted & good husband (forgetting all my faults & overlooking my carelessness) which I desire to be indeed to one whose love I sometimes think I am unworthy of = Write me often my dear wife, & pray for your husband—

Wm. W. O.

Brigade Headquarters Left Division
Army of the Tennessee
June 25 — 1863

My dear wife—

I wrote you yesterday & sent the letter by Lt. Mc Clun. I trust this one by the mail— I am still without the good fortune of a letter from you of later date than June 9th— I hope there is a large lot of letters from your dear pen on the way to me.—

Don't fail to write me very often & give me full details of home & its happy surroundings—

Yesterday after writing you, my pickets were advanced & had quite an affair with the rebels. I was present on the ground witnessing the movement— Our boys the 94th— took a rifle pit & got eight prisoners.— One of our men — Fred Schlagel,¹ who used to butcher for Mr. White— was killed by a shell which nearly cut him in two through the bowels; and another man was seriously but I think not mortally wounded.— It was quite a gallant little affair and the boys behaved finely—

There is nothing specially new around us here—It is still very warm, altho' a pleasant breeze blows this morning—

It seems to me I never was so hot as I was yesterday— I was out to the front 3 hours from 4½ O'Clock to 7½, and when I got to my tent I was perfectly wet to the skin—

¹ Schlagel, Frederick. He enlisted as a private on August 8, 1862 in Co. A of the 94th Illinois volunteer infantry.

I feel very well however this morning— I am comfortably camped on top of a high hill to get all the breeze I can— My tent is just as comfortably arranged as when you were with me at Lake Springs, Mo.— The only alteration is I have a nice rocking chair; and I— have had a mosquito bar fixed over my cot= Everything else around me is just as comfortable. I keep a big stone jug with a corn cob stopple to keep drinking water in— In this way the water keeps cooler & the flies & bugs cannot get in to it— Howard is not well this morning— He complains of headache & want of appetite; he is walking about however, and I dont think is seriously indisposed— He is taking medicine from Dr Chapman whom you may remember to have met in my mess at Lake Spring— Mo.= I will take care of him & try to get him all right speedily—

My love to Fanny & Mother & kind remembrances to all enquiring friends— As for our dear circle at home I cannot so express myself as to say in words my ardent affection & ever increasing love for it— My whole hope of happiness for the future is to be with my dear little ones & their dear good mother. Be happy & enjoy yourself my dear wife & thus comfort my remembrance of home in my absence— Pray for me constantly & always remember

Your devoted husband

Wm. W. Orme

Brigade Headquarters Left Division

Army of the Tennessee

Camp below Vicksburg June 29 — 1863

My dear wife—

Last night after I had rolled into my blankets for a sleep, a messenger called me & handed me a letter which upon close scrutiny in the moonlight proved to be from “her I love”— I immediately got up, lit a candle and commenced reading the letter with as much zeal as a hungry man voraciously devours a long looked for meal— Your letter bore date the 17th and reached me the 28th, so you see we are eleven days

apart. I thought at Prairie Grove we were far enough apart but now it seems to me we are almost out of reach of each other.— I was indeed my dear Nannie truly glad to be the recipient of your good letter, and I hope hereafter to receive them oftener. The photograph of your husband which you sent me is a very good one, and impressed me with the idea that he is a tolerably fair looking individual— Why did you not send me one of the full sized photographs.— I wish you would send me several of each kind as I can use them here.—

I am still well—though I suffer from the heat very much.— The weather depresses me & renders me almost lazy.— If you could see me you would scarcely recognize me from my dress— I wear, no collar, a loose linen coat & my old white hat— This is my regular dress; and no one could guess that I was an officer by seeing me riding along or in the discharge of my ordinary duties. However, I must be comfortable even at the expense of my military etiquette.—

. . . Tell Willy to be a very good boy & learn fast, that I am very proud of him and love him very much.— Tell him that Genl. Grant has his little boy about twelve years old down here with him, and he is quite a nice little soldier.—¹

. . . There are no changes of note since my last letter— Everything around here is the same. From the best information however that we can get, I am inclined to think that Vicksburg cannot hold out many days longer. They are now reduced to short rations, and in a few days longer, say a week or two, they must surrender, unless our information is very incorrect. = We get deserters and prisoners almost every day.— I should like very much to have them surrender before the 4th of July so that we could have a grand military celebration on that day.= But the 4th is now so near at hand that I do not expect the surrender by that time. There is but little diversity in our daily duties— We are firing away at the enemy's works with heavy guns most all the time—

¹ This boy was Frederick Dent Grant (1850-1912). He was with his father during several battles and was wounded at Vicksburg. He graduated at West Point in 1871. He served with distinction under Sherman against the Indians, from 1873-1879. In 1898 he was appointed brigadier-general U. S. Volunteers, and during the war served in Porto Rico and in the Philippine Islands. He became a major-general in 1906.

Sometimes he fires back at us & some times he does not. At night we dig away with shovels and picks to get nearer to the enemy's line of works— I will have a vast amount to tell you about this seige which it would be improper for me to commit to paper now, on account of the uncertainty about my letter reaching you.— I have had ripe peaches here, and a peach cobbler for dinner yesterday.= Figs grow here & will soon be ripe.= The unhealthy season here I am told is in August and September— Give my love to Fanny & your Mother & all at home— Howard is well, but I cannot get him to write; some way or other he dislikes it— Write me often. Give me all details about home; for you must know there can be nothing so interesting as the news from you & our dear ones for your

Affectionate & devoted husband
Wm. W. O.

Vicksburg — Mississippi
July 4th 1863

My dear wife—

With great pride and pleasure I announce my arrival at this celebrated point.— The rebel garrison surrendered at 10 A.M. to-day; and our army with drums beating and banners flying marched in and occupied the rebel works. And here we are—

Oh! what a glorious 4th of July— What a proud day for those of us who are so fortunate as to have taken part in this seige= I do not now know what the number of prisoners is; but it is variously estimated at from 18 to 32 000 rebel count—

We have been very — very busy — marching and moving; securing the rebel arms and properly guarding and picketing our lines— This is a proud day, Nannie, and I would not have missed it for anything.— Only think of it! To march proudly over the great works of the rebels, from which have poured upon us constantly for three weeks their heavy guns, and victoriously to view what before we were combatting! —

I am well— I have rode much to-day in the boiling hot sun, until my clothes were soaking wet— My saddle was wet from the heavy perspiration of my body; but I feel well to-night—and hope I shall feel equally as well in the morning.—

I am now in camp in the beautiful door yard of a British subject— a man who has a fine house, a British flag on it, and no sympathy for the loyal North, but a great respect for the suffering South. =

The rebels surrendered from sheer want of something to eat— But why they should have done it on this— the great day above all others to us— 4th July, I cant divine— The people and rebel soldiers I have met here are very bitter on General Pemberton, their commanding officer— They denounce him as a traitor and as everything else despicable & mean = It is now 11¼ P.M. — I am very tired & will try to sleep a little— as I shall have much to do to-morrow— You must therefore, my dear good wife, excuse this hasty & brief letter—

I don't know where we will go now— But it is surmised that we may be sent down to Port Hudson to help Genl. Banks along. Port Hudson is 250 miles further down the River & is beseiged just as this place was.— When we go down, the place must come. If you should not receive another letter shortly after this, you may then know that I am on the move— and I suppose if I get down to Port Hudson, the safest way for me to come home will be to go to New Orleans and ship around to New York by steamer. Port Hudson you will see on the map, just a little above Baton Rouge, Louisiana.—

I am uneasy at not hearing from you— Have had nothing later than the 17th from you— Had a letter from Judge Davis to-day dated 22d. Show him this when he comes around and say to him if I had time I would write him full details, but I cannot now.— Howard, Charley & Jimmy McC. are well— Give my love to Mother & Fanny— Kiss our dear—dear— little ones often & over for me. And for yourself rest happy & contented, & believe me ever more ardent-

ly and devotedly loving & longing for you, and that sweet time when we shall meet again to part no more on earth.— Oh! for one day of our happy & peaceful home.— When I do get back my dear wife, you may rest assured that no idle dream or vain illusion —no hope of honor or renown—no ambition will lure me away.— My only aim and ambition in the future will be to live peacefully and unknown in my happy home circle.— But I shall not now return until time presents the proper opportunity & I can quit the service with credit— Be happy & contented for my sake— Do write often—

Devotedly your husband
Wm. W. O.

Vicksburg — Miss. — [1863]
July 5 —

My dear wife—

This evening I am happy at having recd, your two good letters of dates June 24 & 26— I also recd. one from Judge Scott of date 27th and one from Frank of the 14th.— So you see I had a pleasant time with letters— But can you guess which of the lot were most acceptable to me? — I am so glad Eddy has recovered, take good care of him & he will soon entirely recover his usual health. I wrote you yesterday, saying I expected to be ordered to Port Hudson —But I have heard nothing of it to-day, and I rather surmise from some movements that have been made to-day that we will remain here for a short time any how.— Uncertainty, however, you know is the rule in military life as to movements.—

I rode through Vicksburg to-day The town is literally Knocked to pieces by our shells— I met Capt. Wickizer who looked as usual and felt very good indeed— There are vast numbers of rebel sick & wounded soldiers all through the town.— The officers & soldiers I have met feel as if the capture of Vicksburg was a sore blow to the Confederacy.— I cannot give you the number of prisoners we have taken as I have no official information— But the number is variously estimated at 25 to 32 000 .==

I met a rebel lady here at the house where I have my Headquarters, who wears a small dagger at her side, and carries a pistol in her trunk.— She talks fierce.— Her husband is a captain in the Rebel Army & they have two children = I didn't like her & she saw it— They have moved from here to-day. Last night I sent her & her Mother a slice of nice cold wheat bread from my table & she was very glad to get it & enjoyed it very much— In turn she sent me a specimen of her bread, made of cornmeal and rice— She is evidently a woman of wealth & fine education. Flour has been selling here at \$5.00 per pound, she told me; and a common straw broom at \$4. What do you think of that.—

These people are terribly reduced here.— This morning one of this lady's children came out to me & said he would like some Yankee bread; he was a little weakly boy, about the same age as our dear little Eddy— I sent Howard to get him some & he brought him four nice rolls left from breakfast and the little fellow enjoyed it hugely— It pleased me to be able to make him happy— and I thought of my own darling children at home as I looked at him enjoying the pure white bread which he had not had for a long while before— He had been taught to say (as children are learned such things you know) that Yankee soldiers were bad; but this morning after refreshing himself on the bread, he told his Ma "that Yankee soldiers were not bad, they were good."

My health, my darling wife, continues good; but I suffer very much from the heat.— I go dressed in my woolen under clothes, as I think it best but I perspire so freely that it seems to me there will be nothing left of me. I don't think the last photograph you sent me— the full length— is as good as the other do you? You can tell Frank to say to his beautiful lady friend, that she may be a good judge of a brave man by his picture, but she is a poor judge of beauty =

I had ripe tomatoes for dinner & supper to-day— They were very fine. We always have good bread now from our Cook Shelby— And as we keep a cow we have an abundance of bread & milk. =

You may say to Mrs Eddy¹ that I recd. a letter from her son Ulysses & will be able to act definitely in a few days,— I preferred Dell Eddy—

Howard & Charley are well.= You must keep yourself in good spirits, my dear wife, and be happy.— I will endeavor to return to you this fall— at least for a visit if nothing else.— But I am much inclined, if everything in the West is settled to return home to stay.— It seems to me now as if we had a clear field before us in this region of country— and I shall remain in the service no longer than I think duty requires me to do so— I am more desirous than ever to return again to my quiet and happy home, where I may rest in peace with my dear family— Continue to write me often, for you have no idea Nannie how my heart yearns to you, and is made happy only by loving you.—

Kiss the little ones— My love to all— and wait patiently the happy moment when I may once more clasp you in my arms.— Don't fail to write—

Devotedly Your husband
Wm. W. O.

Brigade Headquarters Herron's Division
Vicksburg — Miss. July 7 1863.

My darling wife—

Time speeds on slowly, and I am yet here in the famous city of Vicksburg.— This morning I arose at half past four O'Clock, ordered a contraband carriage which we are using & drove off to view the town. I took the early hours of the morning in order to escape the heat of the sun. I was accompanied by Capt. Routt Capt. Stephens & Lt. Foster¹— We drove all through the town, up one street and down another to witness the great destruction made by the shells from our Mortar boats.— The town in its best days contains a population of only 6 000 people. But there is every evidence of much taste & wealth in the residences.— Nearly every house

¹ The two sons of Mrs. Eddy were Adelbert S. Eddy, Captain of Co. B in the New York Heavy Artillery and Ulysses D. Eddy, Lieutenant in the same company.

² Routt, John L. Captain of Company E of the 94th I. V. I.

has recd. some damage. The Court house, which is a fine building costing about \$150,000 was struck in the roof and the shell descended through the building tearing up the inside very badly— Many houses have been completely knocked down while others stand showing their gaping wounds. =

From the best information I can gather we have taken very nearly 30 000 prisoners, 50 000 stand of small arms and 110 cannon, besides a large amount of ammunition— News reached here last evening that Genl. Sherman had attacked Joe Johnston the rebel General out at Big Black River, and defeated him very badly capturing some 6000 prisoners.— This news however is not yet positively confirmed but is received as true.—²

We have intelligence from Port Hudson that it cannot hold out much longer than three or four days— and we will get there some 10,000 prisoners. = So you will readily discover that in this region of the country this wicked rebellion is being rapidly crushed out. = I am very well this morning my dear Nannie, and really stand the weather much better than I anticipated— You may rest assured if anything befalls me I will give you immediate notice of it; and if I get seriously sick I will turn my face homeward very speedily—

Do you keep well? Oh what would I not give to meet you now.— If I see that we are going to remain here I will extend you an invitation to come down & see me— What do you think of that— There is nothing certain about our movements, and I may remain here or may be ordered off— The weather is too hot to move troops on the march very actively— If Port Hudson falls speedily we will not go there— And the prospect now is we may be sent across the River into Southern Arkansas, to hunt up Gen. Price who is running loose over there somewhere— I will keep you fully advised however of whatever may transpire.—

Last evening I went up stairs to call on Col. Hall, a wounded rebel officer— He was severely wounded in the leg;

² This was only a rumor.

& his wife & four children are here with him— They are from Louisiana & he is Colonel of the 26th La. Regt.— I found him a polite gentleman, & his wife a polished dignified and modest lady.— He was formerly of Chicago having lived there from 1855 to 1860 and then returned to his old home Louisiana.— He asked me if I knew a Lawyer by the name of Orme of Bloomington Ills., who was of the firm of Swett & Orme; I told him I was the person— and then he remarked that I had done some legal business for his firm while he lived in Chicago.— The name of his firm was Hall, Honore, & Co.³— I recognized the name & remembered the business— He knew all the men in Chicago that I did. = I knew that he must be in destitute circumstances from his long & close confinement in this place & I told him & his wife as I left them not to let anything prevent them from informing me of their wants and I would have them supplied from the Commissariat with provisions = They are proud people though, I guess; and do not like to appear asking for anything— But, Nannie, I remembered my own dear wife & little ones as I looked upon Mrs Hall & her four pretty children, and memory called to mind the golden rule “Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you.” — And I know I should feel grateful to any one who in the hour of my misfortune proffered kind words and acts to my darling wife & children. — What do you think of it? The rebel officers and soldiers are very much surprised at the kind and humane treatment they are receiving at our hands; and their minds are being relieved from the false impressions they have received as to our real characters and intentions. I really think that the mingling together of our troops with the rebel soldiers is having a decided and good effect in our favor =

A rebel Genl. Reynolds⁴ of Va. called on me this morning— He was a pleasant old gentleman, and was astonished to see so young a man as myself wearing stars— I had a

³ Wholesale Hardware and Cutlery, 51 Lake St.

⁴ Probably Col. Alex W. Reynolds of 50th Virginia Regiment. Acting brigadier general of Fourth Brigade, Stevenson's Division before his capture and again after his exchange in August, 1863.

pleasant conversation with him— He told me of a Major Orme in his army & promised to send him over to see me.— It may be he is related to me in some way. = Howard recd. a letter last evening from Fanny— He is well so is Charley. = I hope you are well & happy this morning, and as I suppose for the first time hearing the news of the capture of Vicksburg— Keep in good heart, & of good cheer; time will roll around rapidly & I will soon again return to your embrace to be happy & undisturbed forever on earth— Write me often— Kiss our loved & darling children & enjoy yourself on my account at least—

Good bye dearest one— Remember constantly & lovingly
Your devoted husband
Wm. W.O.

Vicksburgh — July 10 — [1863]

9 A. M.

My dear wife—

I have been made so happy by the receipt of your letter of the 30th June which I just rec. = Its tone is cheerful & pleasant— Always be so on my account—

I am well to-day— And I have just learned that we are under orders for Port Hudson — 250 miles below here. Only think of that— When we get down there however, the place must fall.— I have no particulars about Genl. Banks' position there but I conceive he finds it a heavier job than he expected. The next time I start for home I guess it will be by way of New Orleans to New York—

I am pleased at the order to move, because I have been here long enough— I only regret the extreme hot weather in which we are moving about in this country.—

Show this letter to Judge Davis & say to him I would write but I have no time—

After this I cannot say when you may look for another letter from me— I will write as often as I can, but what chance the letters will have to reach you I cannot say.— I think now is the crisis of the war— Success all around now

will bring a speedy end to this wicked rebellion, peace to our country, and an anxious husband to his loving wife & happy family—

You might send a note to the [Bloomington] Pantagraph stating that I have written you we are going to Port Hudson— so that the people may know where we are.— I think you had better keep the position they have given you in Dr. Reed's College— It won't hurt you any, nor require any unnecessary time— and it is intended as a mark of respect to you— I would advise you to let it remain as it is— But do as you think best— You have good judgment, and you know I rely upon it—

Excuse this hasty scrawl— Love to all— Kiss our dear little ones often & often for me— Remember & pray for me & rest assured I am as ever most devotedly & affectionately

Your husband

Wm. W. O.

Don't fail to write me often as heretofore—direct to this point (care of Genl. Herron) & they will reach me some time or other—

July 10 — 2 P.M. [1863]

Dearest Nannie—

Since writing the other sheet & sealing it &c ready to mail I have learned we will not leave here until to-morrow at 8 A.M. We will then (unless some news reaches us from below that will relieve us from the trip) start down the river on transports to take part in the siege of Port Hudson— We will only remain there during the siege, and will return here again— It is expected that we will not be needed longer than a week or ten days— When the siege is over we are expected to be returned here & placed on garrison duty for a while.—

I am pleased at the prospect of the trip down the river & will enjoy it I think— It cannot be much warmer at Port Hudson than here.— Dr. Major¹ of Bloomington reached here this morning— Also Mr. Richardson—²

¹ Major, Dr. John M. of Bloomington, Illinois. He was a practising physician and landowner.

² He was on a visit to see his son John W. Richardson, Private in Co. B of the 94th.

I recd this morning a letter from Frank, one from Davis, & one from Prince besides the one from yourself & one from Mr. Shaffer³ = The letters from Davis & Prince each contained a letter from Mr. Swett, written May 30 & June 9th— I am in receipt of news as last as July 4th from St. Louis in reference to movements in the East, & I hope & pray that Gen. Meade's success is as great as the dispatches indicate.— I never fancied Hooker— simply because he boasted too much of himself.— I don't care who defeats the rebels so it is done— My only aim is to look for success; the man who wins it for our armies shall receive my praise, irrespective of his birthplace, his education or his color.— I want the rebellion crushed & the man who succeeds in that is the man for the country— Gen. Halleck I think is a complete failure— and the sooner he gets out of the way of his country's success the better.—

I will write Judge Davis a line this evening— indicating my movements. = I have no special news We are all as well as usual— Howard & Charley are well. Mosquitos & hot weather are our Chief troubles— Write me often— Love to yr. Mother & Fanny. Howard recd. a letter from Fanny yesterday written at some place in Indiana.— What do the people say about the fall of Vicksburg? It is a great victory— There are some of the details of the surrender I do not approve of— But I will write more fully when more time presents itself—

As ever devotedly
Yours Wm.

Vicksburg — July 11 [1863]
6 A.M.

Dearest Nannie—

We are off this morning— to go farther down into Dixie— Will reach Port Hudson at about 8 O'Clock to-morrow morning—

³ Shaffer, Wm. L. He took care of Gen Orme's business affairs in Bloomington during the war.

We embark on the Steamboats Tecumseh and Meteor.=
I do not know yet which boat I shall take for my Hd. Qrs.—

We will return here before many days, where I hope to
receive a large lot of nice long letters from my darling wife—

Love to all— Kiss the little ones—

Devotedly Your husband

Wm. W. O.

On Board Transport Meteor

Vicksburg— Miss—

July 11—1863—

Saturday night

My dear wife—

I wrote you this morning at 6 A.M., and afterwards wrote a short note about 9 O'Clk & sent it by Wm. P. Withers,¹ whom I found quite sick on board the Steamer Luminary, en route for home. = We laid here all day to-day, until about 4 O'Clock this afternoon a boat came up the river from Port Hudson bringing the glorious news that the place had surrendered to Gen. Banks with 5000 prisoners, and 60 pieces of cannon= This of course relieved us of the necessity of going down there.— I recd. orders to retain my command on the Transports & await further instructions; and to night I am under orders to move up the Yazoo River to Yazoo City at 8 O'Clock to-morrow morning (Sunday) Yazoo City is about 60 miles from here— Our whole Division will go up. =

I therefore drop you this line to-night to keep you posted as to my movements. —

What change in the programme may be made to-night, I cannot surmise— But I would much prefer not to make that trip— My only reason is that I fear the Country may be unhealthy there.— We have received news here of what seems to be a glorious victory achieved by Gen. Meade— I do hope this news is true— If it be true I can begin to see through the difficulties— In this section of the Country, the Rebels have been rather thoroughly cleaned out; and a

¹ Wm. P. Withers was Captain of Co. C, Fifth Illinois Cavalry.

great victory in Virginia or Pennsylvania, will demoralize the whole rebel army.

Gen. Meade has made himself a great hero if he has whipped Lee; hasn't he?

Oh! that all this news may be true, and our bleeding country soon have peace and rest again. The results of the campaigns down here during the past 30 days have been the capture of 50 000 prisoners, and nearly 300 pieces of artillery, and vast amounts of ammunition and small arms— This of itself is a terrible— almost a death-blow to the rebellion; saying nothing of their complete loss of the Mississippi River which cuts their states in two & severs their Confederacy.—

I am anxiously looking for some letters from you & hope to receive some before leaving here. I will write as often as I can & endeavor to keep you fully advised of all my movements— Don't fail to write me often, because your letters will find me somewhere— Direct to care of Gen. Herron as heretofore.—

Be easy and comfortable and as happy as you can be,— during my absence.— Good spirits will keep up good health—

Kiss the little ones often for me, and pray for & remember Nannie.

Your devoted husband

Wm. W. Orme

Sunday 12th July

7 A. M.

We are now ready to move & will get off by 8 O'Clk.— There is nothing special to do at Yazoo City, except to clean out a small rebel nest there. We will return here—

Transport Meteor-
at Sartartia— Miss
on Yazoo River

My dear wife =

July 13 1863

Altho' I have no immediate chance of mailing a letter, the great pleasure I derive even from writing to you has in-

duced me to begin this and hold it open until I have an opportunity of mails.—

We left Vicksburg yesterday morning at 8 A.M. and steamed up the Mississippi to the Yazoo then up the Yazoo to the Chickasaw Bayou where we waited three or four hours for the balance of the fleet— At Chickasaw Bayou we recd. a mail from which two letters were handed me— one of them of date July 3d. from Frank and one of date July 2d signed “Your devoted wife, Nannie,—” The latter afforded me much pleasure and I read it, re-read, and read it the third time before I laid it away. The knowledge that you were all well at that time makes me feel comfortable.=

We remained at Chickasaw Bayou until the boats arrived & then continued up the River to Haines Bluff where in company with Genls. Herron & Vandever¹, I called on Maj. Genl. Washburne.² About 5½ P.M. we started again up the River and tied up for the night at the Mouth of the Little Sunflower river.— At 3½ A.M. of to-day we pushed out and reached Sartartia at 8 O’Clock A.M.; and after laying there up to the time I commenced this letter we are now at a quarter to nine O’Clk. pushing off again up the Yazoo— We are now some 30 miles from Yazoo City which is our point of destination— There are four gunboats and 8 transports in the fleet= We expect to meet an enemy at Yazoo City, but it is not certainly known that there is a rebel force there— The rebels have some fortifications on the River at that point with seven heavy guns mounted, as we learn.— We will soon know however what there is up there. The Yazoo is a very crooked and deep river, but very narrow— Where we are now it is not wide enough to turn a steamboat around in it— By an examination of a map you can see our line of movements= We have no transportation aboard with us, and I do not suppose we will remain here or rather up the Country many days.—

¹ Vandever, Brig. Gen. William. He assumed command, April 9, 1863, of the Second Division of the Army of the Frontier.

² Washburn, Cadwallader C., (1818-1882). In November, 1862 he was promoted to Major General and was given a division in the Army of the Tennessee. He was Governor of Wisconsin, 1872-1874.

However our movements will be determined by the future turn of events. —

I saw a St. Louis Democrat yesterday of date 7th July— The news from the Army of the Potomac was glorious— Our loss however must have been very heavy indeed— Many very fine officers have fallen there.=

July 15. — Well, dearest, a longer time has elapsed than I supposed when I commenced this letter before I have returned to it to conclude it.— We reached Yazoo City about 3 O'Clock of the 13th; the gunboat DeKalb advanced up the River to the City when she was fired on by the Batteries & was driven back— Our fleet then dropped down the River about one mile where I was ordered to disembark one Regiment & send it forward to the City in the rear— I ordered forward the 94th and accompanied it myself— It was near 6½ P.M. when we started; I accompanied the Regiment in person— We marched about three miles, and it was as dark as pitch. We had to advance very cautiously not knowing the road, nor what we should have to contend with = At 8 O'Clock however, groping thro' the darkness we entered the city.— The enemy had fled on our approach. I immediately took possession of the Batteries placed guards over them, and sent out forces on the road I learned the enemy had taken— We captured during the night about 100 prisoners, but could not catch up with the main force of the enemy.— I occupied the town & now hold it. We built signal lights on the river bank to signal the Boats to come up. The De Kalb—the finest gun boat on the River— started up and about ½ mile from the landing struck a torpedo and was blown up.— And none of the other Boats dared to venture up the River.— I remained in town all night; slept none during the night, and moved up the balance of my Brigade; and we are now comfortably located in the City.— The soldiers in spite of all my efforts have done a great deal of pillaging in the place.—

So that all you may see in the newspapers about the work done here you may give me credit for.= This is a very pleasant little town of some 3 or 4,000 people = It was

once a large business point, but the war has dried up its sources of Revenue.—

There are some beautiful residences here. We are now luxuriating on plenty of fresh vegetables of all kinds & fruit—Young chickens in abundance.—

I have taken my quarters in a very comfortable place where I have nice clean beds of fine style and well arranged with mosquito bars.— Last night I slept magnificently.— You may suppose that I was quite sleepy when I first laid down— and the bed was so nice that I had to be called three times this morning before I got ready for breakfast =

I have no idea how long we shall stay here— But apprehend it will only be a few days. =

I am quite well, and do not suffer so much from the heat here— I think it is cooler here than at Vicksburg.— I have no news in the world. It seems that we are isolated from the world. A boat will probably be up to-day which will bring our mails and then I hope to have several good letters from you.— You have no idea of the great pleasure your letters afford me.= While here I can write you but seldom as we have no regular mail facilities. So you must be prepared to do without your usual supply of letters until I reach some point where our communication is more perfect.— I shall write however at every chance.—

I know that long before this you know of the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson— Oh! how the country has cause for gladness. The people here are tired of the war, and think the fall of Vicksburg is a death blow to the Confederacy. There can be no doubt of that in my opinion, and I should not be surprised at any time to hear of the cessation of hostilities and a restoration of peace. I send a Yazoo City paper by to-day's mail to the Echo.—⁴

My love to all— Kiss the jewels of our happy home— our dear children— and let the brightest jewel of my household— my darling wife—patiently await the hour when she

⁴ The 'McLean County Echo' was a daily edited and published by C. P. Merriman in Bloomington, Illinois from June 12, 1863-1864.

may hang upon the neck, the pride, and source of happiness, comfort and pleasure, of her devoted husband— The hour is not very far distant— Love to your mother— Keep her at your house as long as you can— Write often— I am interrupted so much that I must close = Show this to Judge Davis, so that he may know where I am —

As ever Yr. husband

Wm. W. O.

The following note was enclosed in Gen. Orme's letter of Aug. 6, 1863 but it chronologically belongs here. In the letter of Aug. 6 it is described thus; "It was written to me at Yazoo City and reached me about 9 O'Clock of the evening I took possession of the town. [Aug. 13]"

General

I have just heard that you occupy the town. Picket the roads well to prevent ingress or egress, and have the town thoroughly searched tonight for officers or men left behind. The 20th Wis has marched by the rear to meet you. I started up on the Benton¹ and when opposite the navy yard, the Boat was blown up by a torpedo. She sank in fifteen minutes, and we had a very narrow escape. I will see you at a very early hour in the morning.

Respectfully

F. J. Herron

Maj Gen

Brig Genl Orme

P.S. Send two companies at 4 o'clock in the morning, out on the Benton road to pick up deserters or stragglers, as I understand there are many out that way. Let them go out five miles.

¹ Commander Isaac N. Brown of the Confederate Navy reported, "We have sunk by torpedoes, in sight of Yazoo City, the iron-clad DeKalb, of thirteen guns." War of the Rebellion Naval Records, Series I, Vol. 24, Part III.

Gen. Herron probably had Benton, Mississippi in mind, a small town a few miles east of Yazoo City.

Yazoo City— Miss.
July 21 1863
Tuesday 8 A.M.

My dear wife—

Our troops have all re-embarked and the prows of our fleet turned down stream for Vicksburgh— As we were the first to enter the place so now I am the last to leave it— My Boat the “Meteor” is the last in the order of sailing— I have had no opportunity since mailing a letter from Yazoo City last week to send you another— We have had no communication down the River since our arrival here— This will account for my week’s silence, and for your delay in the usual supply of letters— I have had nothing from home since the letter I recd. on the 12th, but am anxiously awaiting our arrival at Vicksburgh where doubtless a large mail is awaiting us.—

Our mission has been accomplished here— We have driven off the enemy, captured arms &c, and we are now returning with some 3000 bales of cotton, 600 or 800 head of mules horses &c; and 1500 negro slaves men, women and children.— If we had more boats we could have brought off three— yes twenty-times as many bales of cotton, many more mules, and a much larger number of slaves.—

Yazoo City has been a pleasant little town— There is much wealth and elegance here, and the surrounding country is the finest and richest I have ever seen.—

Altho’ excessively warm here, and usually much sickness prevailing, I have enjoyed my ordinary health, and am feeling to-day very well.— I had good quarters while in the City— splendid bed, and good living— Our mess has been supplied with everything in abundance; young chickens, geese turkeys and mutton; vegetables of all kinds and ripe apples.—

While in command I have been visited by all kinds of people; men & women & children, black as well as white; the very rich as well as the very poor; wealthy ladies, bitter and sarcastic in their dispositions and talk; poor ladies quiet and

reserved and almost loyal.— All of them on business; some begging me to leave them a servant or two, some asking to retain a pair of mules, some needing a wagon, a horse, a cow or a calf which our soldiers had taken, and many asking for provisions.— I endeavored to treat them all well; but I scolded the haughty and rebellious, seized their cotton, mules and negroes without any feeling of sympathy, while I encouraged the poor & the loyal and aided them as I could.

I have many notes & letters of all sorts sent me by ladies— I enclose you a few specimens =

I preserved the town from harm— That is the buildings and residences are unharmed. Everything was taken however that we needed in any way.— Many of the prominent citizens, while regretting the loss of their property, complimented me on the quiet and good order preserved in the town— And on the good conduct of my officers and men.— I told them that we wanted to make them feel this war— They were living here rich, proud and haughty and did not feel the consequences of their rebellion; that we intended to carry this war home to them and show them we were in earnest; so that their posterity might take warning from the folly of the present generation in its wicked efforts to overthrow our government. = They all feel conquered now; and the most prominent people acknowledge that the rebellion is about ended.— Oh! that our peace men at home— the Copperheads I mean — were down here; they would be treated with contempt by the very people they are supporting in their rebellious purposes.=

I have seen no paper for ten days; but the people through this section of country have many reports that cause them to feel in very low spirits— It is reported among them, that Stephens, the Rebel Vice President, started to Washington with propositions for peace— And that Genl. Lee has been very badly whipped in Pennsylvania & Maryland.— But all the people here acknowledge whipped. Where we shall go when we reach Vicksburgh I cannot tell— Gen. Herron expects orders to go up the Red River—, but

whether that will be our destination or whether we will be placed to garrison some town or point of prominence I can't guess.

I would just as leave take a run up Red River as not.— To do so, we would have to go much further down the Mississippi—

We are bringing away from Yazoo City some 6 or 8 Union families— There are some little children and babies; one of them being very much like our darling Eddy.—

I forgot to tell you that Yazoo City is only about 100 or 150 miles from Coffeetown, the place where your dear father gave his life like a patriot hero as he was—⁽¹⁾ Coffeetown is Northeast of Yazoo City = I send you in an envelope accompanying this letter a paper published by our boys while we were in Yazoo City—⁽²⁾

Well my dear Nannie, I somehow feel that this war is very nearly over— I think the fall of Vicksburg is the turning point of the rebellion; and I can almost see my way home to remain there permanently within three or four months— For I assure you just so soon as I can see this war closing up without need of my feeble services or limited influence I shall turn my face homeward, there to remain under our quiet, peaceful and happy roof to live for and enjoy the blessings Kind Providence has thrown around me in my good wife, my beautiful and affectionate children.— Until that hour arrives bear up cheerfully under my absence, so that when I do return we may again be happy in each others society, and indulge a pardonable pride in each other; you of me because I had given my services to my country; and let me feel proud of you for your patient and cheerful endurance of my long and painful absence from you and our children— We will both be more worthy of each other, and the future will bring pleasure to us in our recollections of the past.—

¹ Col. William McCullough; see footnote of letter of October 20, 1862.

² This very interesting paper edited by "Mudsill, Mr. Small-Fisted Farmer, Mr. Greasy Mechanic" was presented to the Illinois Historical Survey of the University of Illinois by Mrs. Lucy Orme Morgan of Bloomington, Illinois.

Take good care of our dear little ones, and keep me in their constant remembrance— Be happy and joyful with them so that no cloud of sorrow may pass over their young and innocent minds.— Give my love to Fanny & yr. Mother— Charley & Howard are very well. Remember me to all friends—and rest assured, dearest wife, of my constant love and remembrance = You do not long more anxiously to see me & have me with you, than I to return once more to your affectionate influence—

Show this to Judge Davis— I will write him when I have more leisure— I will write again from Vicksburg. The motion of the boat is so great I cannot write easily = As ever most devotedly and affectionately

Your husband

Wm. W. O.

Vicksburg— Miss.

July 22^d. /63

Dearest wife—

I reached here safely last evening, but remained on the Boats until today— Our troops all disembarked and got fairly in-to camp by 4or5 O'Clock this P.M.— Last night almost as soon as our Boat reached the bank, your letters of the 5th 7th and 9th July, as also letters from Davis, Scott, and Frank were placed in my anxious hands.—

I was much pleased to know that you were all well, and as happy as circumstances permit.— About the buggy that you desire you have my views in a former letter, and I can only now re-assure you that it would much please me if you would suit yourself to a nice one.— I have a very fine one here that I can let you have if you can send down for it.— Ever since I have been down here I have had a buggy & horses (captured of course— or as we say confiscated) in which I do all my riding during the heat of the day.— While at Yazoo City I got a very nice two horse buggy & harness— I find it almost essential to use something of the sort, as the

sun beams down so intensely hot that I can scarcely stand it.—

You have no idea, my dear wife, of the excessive heat here.— It is just as hot as can be. = To night we have had a little shower which has cooled the air and made it much pleasanter. =

Well, Nannie, we are on the move again— I am now under orders to take the Boats to-morrow, and we shall pull out to-morrow night down the River. Our destination is New Orleans—

What do you think of that— It seems as if every step were taking me still farther from that dear spot on which all my thoughts centre.— However I am pleased at the prospect— As long as I am in the service I want to be moving— And I have long desired to visit New Orleans. It certainly cannot be much warmer there than here, and the City has been so well governed for a twelve month that we may expect to find there everything that will tend to our comfort and convenience.— I am taking the best possible care of myself and am enjoying good health, tho' suffering much inconvenience from the extreme heat. I shall continue to care for & protect my health by all means within my reach, and you may rest assured that I shall leave nothing undone necessary to preserve my health,— while I have the opportunity of protecting it. =

Charley & Howard are both well.— We have no news of interest here. I have seen St. Louis papers as late as the 16th, and Chicago, of the 14th. I am glad to see that the government is enforcing the Draft— It has already delayed too long in doing so.— I hope many virulent Copperheads may be drawn and put into the Service— If they could hear rebels talk down here I think they would be better Union men.— You must be of good cheer during my trip down the River— Write me as often as usual, but don't feel uneasy about not receiving letters from me as often as usual, because I shall be on the move for a week and will be much further away from you. But I shall write as often as I can,

and when I get located again will write you at least once a day.— You cannot write me too often; your letters will find me somewhere, and when they do reach me they afford me great pleasure.— If you have no time, simply drop me a short line, saying “all well” or something as short, and sign your dear name to it— Direct your letters as heretofore— thus: “Brig. Genl. Wm. W. Orme, Herron’s Division Vicksburg, Miss.”— My love to all at home— Kiss our dear sweet children often & often. Tell Eddy I will soon be home again, and then I will stay with him all the time.— Tell Willy to be a very good boy and take care of his Ma and little sisters.= I may write you again to-morrow before the Boat leaves.— Be happy and comfortable, take good care of our little ones and I will soon return to our happy home and share its pleasures and its burdens with you— Good night! dear Nannie!

Your devoted husband
Wm. W. Orme

On Transport “Des Arc”
Below Natchez— Miss.
on the River— En Route
July 25 1863
Saturday 7 P. M.

Dearest & best of wives—

Since writing you yesterday, we pulled out from Vicksburg and started down the River about 6½ P.M.— We reached Warrenton (10 miles) and laid to all night— At 4 O’Clock this morning we pulled out again and have been running all day.— At 2½ O’Clock to-day we passed Natchez, but did not stop there— I could not see much of the town, as it is situated back on the bluffs of the River and thus hid from sight— I am told it is a beautiful city and has thus far escaped the ravages of war.=

We will reach Port Hudson at some hour to-night, perhaps about 2 O’Clk in the morning.— I think we shall only remain there a day or so and then push on to New Orleans.—

To-day we have met boats running up the River, with discharged troops from Genl. Bank's command— They are two years men whose term of enlistment has expired and are all Eastern men.— What happy hearts must have been on that Boat— as to them war has ceased and they return as patriot heroes to their homes; homes, made happy perhaps by wife and children as mine is,— And yet they must know & feel that they are passing quietly home over a road that has been cut out for them by Western men.—

Sunday— July 26— p A.M.

I stopped writing last night on account of the shaking movement of the Boat—Last night at 1½ O'Clock we reached Port Hudson and remain here yet— Our troops are all ashore, and the Boats are being cleaned up— We are waiting to receive orders from Gen. Banks who is at New Orleans There is a telegraph from here to New Orleans the distance being 155 miles— I am a good ways from home now— Only take the map and look at the distance— I think when I start home again I shall go round from New Orleans to N. York by steamer and have you meet me at New York City— Then we can run down to Washington together and make a pleasant visit— How would you like that— I am very comfortably fixed on Board of my Boat— Everything is neat & clean and airy— We have ice, so we can keep cool— At Vicksburg we succeeded in getting a Keg of ale, so that at dinner I can have my great relish of a glass of ale & ice.— I am very well— with the exception of a slight diarrhea which set in last night; but I am using remedies which will soon check it up.— This climate is very severe on our men making quite a number of them sick & when they get sick it is very difficult for them to recuperate =

Our regiments are very much reduced in numbers and if the weather does not get cooler we will have a large number of sick men. I have nothing specially new here— I have nearly made up my mind to get back home about the first of October— At any rate I believe the rebellion will be near enough ended to justify my return about that time.— With

a few successes on the coast, the capture of Charleston for instance, there certainly must be an end of the war; it is folly for the rebels to contend longer.—

I shall close now to get this letter mailed here.— I shall write you as often as I find chance to mail a letter to you— But you must expect only a letter semi-occasionally now as I have got so far away from regular mail facilities that it will be only now & then I can send you a letter. Write me often as usual— Your letters will reach me at some time— Kiss our dear little ones many times for me, tell them I will soon again be with them. Love to yr. Mother & Fanny.— Say to your mother that she should not furnish Willy with either money or new clothes; but let him go ragged if he will act the way he does.— Charley is about as usual—Howard is well— Good bye! I will write again tomorrow if we are here

As ever Yr. devoted husband
Wm.W.O.

Head Quarters— Orme's Brigade
Herron's Division—
On Dry Land,
near Port Hudson
Aug. 6, 1863

My dear good wife—

As you will perceive by the head of my letter I am once more ashore.— To-day I moved from the Transport Des Arc into camp on the bluffs of the Mississippi a mile and a half below the, once insignificant but now famous, village of Port Hudson, La.— I have exchanged the small, close & hot state room of the steamboat, for my cool, airy and spacious tent, and I hope too that in the change I have left behind me the vast army of bloodthirsty mosquitoes, which for now nearly one month have annoyed me almost to distraction.— But I can tell better about that in the morning— Oh! I have my fears! for just now one lean looking chap has lit upon my shirt sleeve.— However there is one consolation, they cannot be any worse here than on the Boat.—

I rather suspect we shall be allowed to remain at this point for a short time— I had hoped it would not be so, as I think it is quite sickly here.— We have very much sickness among the troops. So far however I have escaped anything serious, and am doing much better here than I could hope or expect in this climate at this season of the year.— August will soon roll by and then we shall have some cooler weather.— No Boats have gone up the River since I came up from New Orleans until to-day— I sent forward by Capt. Tim Owens,¹ who was going up, two letters for you, the one written at New Orleans and the other written at this point after my return. I intended to have had another ready but I was so busy moving and the boat came by sooner than I expected so that I lost the chance.

Mail facilities are so imperfect hereaway that it is only about once a week I have a chance to forward letters North = We have had no mail down for a week, and my latest dates from home are to the 19th of July only. So you see I am without news from my dear ones for nearly three weeks.— I am informed that there is a large mail at Vicksburg for us, but by somebody's neglect it is not forwarded.=

I have nothing new to say to you. Dullness reigns supreme in this locality— In looking over my papers I came across the enclosed letter from Gen. Herron—² It was written to me at Yazoo City and reached me about 9 O'Clock of the evening I took possession of the town. As a sort of relic of that trip I thought I would send it to you to keep.— It bears neither date nor place of writing.— You will observe the Genl. gives an account of being nearly blown up.— These little papers will be precious relics in after years to us— May we long live in the future to enjoy in each other's affectionate society the many recollections of the rapidly growing past!— Port Hudson is only a place of five or six houses— a short piece of railroad runs out here some 15 miles back into the country.— The bluffs are very high and well cal-

¹ Owen, Timothy of Bloomington, Ill. Captain of Co. D of the 94th.

² This note has been placed in its chronological order following the letter of July 13-15, 1863.

culated for defense; but by no means so strong a point as Vicksburg. Dr. Major who has been down here has been quite sick & put for home to-day. He has been with me even to New Orleans— go & see him— But I fear he will give a distressing account of affairs here— If he does, only remember he was very sick while here & everything looked to him a hundred times worse than it really is.— Then a sick citizen has but little sympathy in the Army. You can see how that is— But I had the opportunity of aiding him some by giving him a quiet berth on my Boat and letting him use our ice, which is a very great deal down here. = Howard is well & Charley is improving— Charley has chills & fevers = Good bye! Kiss our dear children— My love to all at home. Write me often— Remember & pray for your devoted husband who longs anxiously to see you.

= Wm. W. O. =

Carrollton— La—

Aug 14 [1863]

My dear wife—

Here I am with my Brigade in camp in sight of the buildings of the City of New Orleans—

This place is a small town adjoining the City.— I am in a tent, pitched under the orange and the lime tree— The great huge white oak of a century's growth throws its large arms over all & makes a thick cool shade— My tent is about 400 yards from the Bank of the Mississippi = We reached here yesterday afternoon & I have been very busy disembarking and camping my troops— And now at this hour of 3 P.M. to-day everything in order here I am hastily dropping you a notice of my whereabouts, & devoutly wishing for night that I may get a good rest which I so badly need.— I am tolerably well— as well as any body who came down here— We are all used up to a great extent— Only think of being in New Orleans as a visitor in the middle of August. You can have no possible idea of the very great depression of the hot weather—

Charles is much better, tho yet quite ill. He is in good quarters & well fixed— I think he will recover in a week or ten days, but he is not yet out of danger— I write now in a hurry, but will write again to-night— Don't feel uneasy about me I will do the best I can to keep well— I have gained very much since I left Port Hudson—

Love to all— & a Kiss for my wife
As ever devotedly
Yours

Wm. W. O.

New Orleans — La.

Aug. 18 — 1863

Dearest Nannie—

I am about as well as usual to-day.— It is a cool pleasant morning, made so by the rains of yesterday & last night.— We have no news of any interest— Everything is dull and quiet. This afternoon at 3 P. M. I have an engagement with Dr. Kells, a dentist, to fix a tooth for me. = One of my back teeth needs filling badly. I neglected to have it fixed while I was at home.—

This morning a Mr. Cox of Mc Lean County¹ called on me. He is down here after his son who is sick.—

I think the men are improving since they came down here— It is very much pleasanter here than at Port Hudson. And most everything can be had that is needed. Prices are very high tho'.— I paid 50 cents for 6 apples— Butter is 30 to 45cts per pound— Beef & mutton from 40 to 60 cents a pound.— Fish are very high too though quite abundant.— My mess is supplied fresh every morning by a wagon from the City Market.—

Enclosed I send Eddy a little hat. It has his name on it. It is the buckskin from the top of a small bottle of perfumery. It may please the little boy, as it comes from New Orleans. I am expecting letters from you every day, but the mails arrive very slowly some how or another— I have nothing from

¹ Cox, David. He was visiting his son William Marcus Cox, Private in Co. F of 94th.

you later than July 31st— I recd. a letter from Scott of date Aug. 3d.—

Don't fail to write me often. I am all the time anxious about home & frequent letters bringing me tidings of your continued health relieve me very much =

My love to Fanny & yr. Mother— Kiss our dear children for me & rest assured my dear wife of my continued & ardent love & affection—

Good bye —

Your devoted husband

Wm. W. O.

